

18

# Domestic Girlfriend

K E I S A S U G A

D O M E X G I R L



# Domestic Girlfriend

18

D O M E  
G I R L

KEI SASUGA



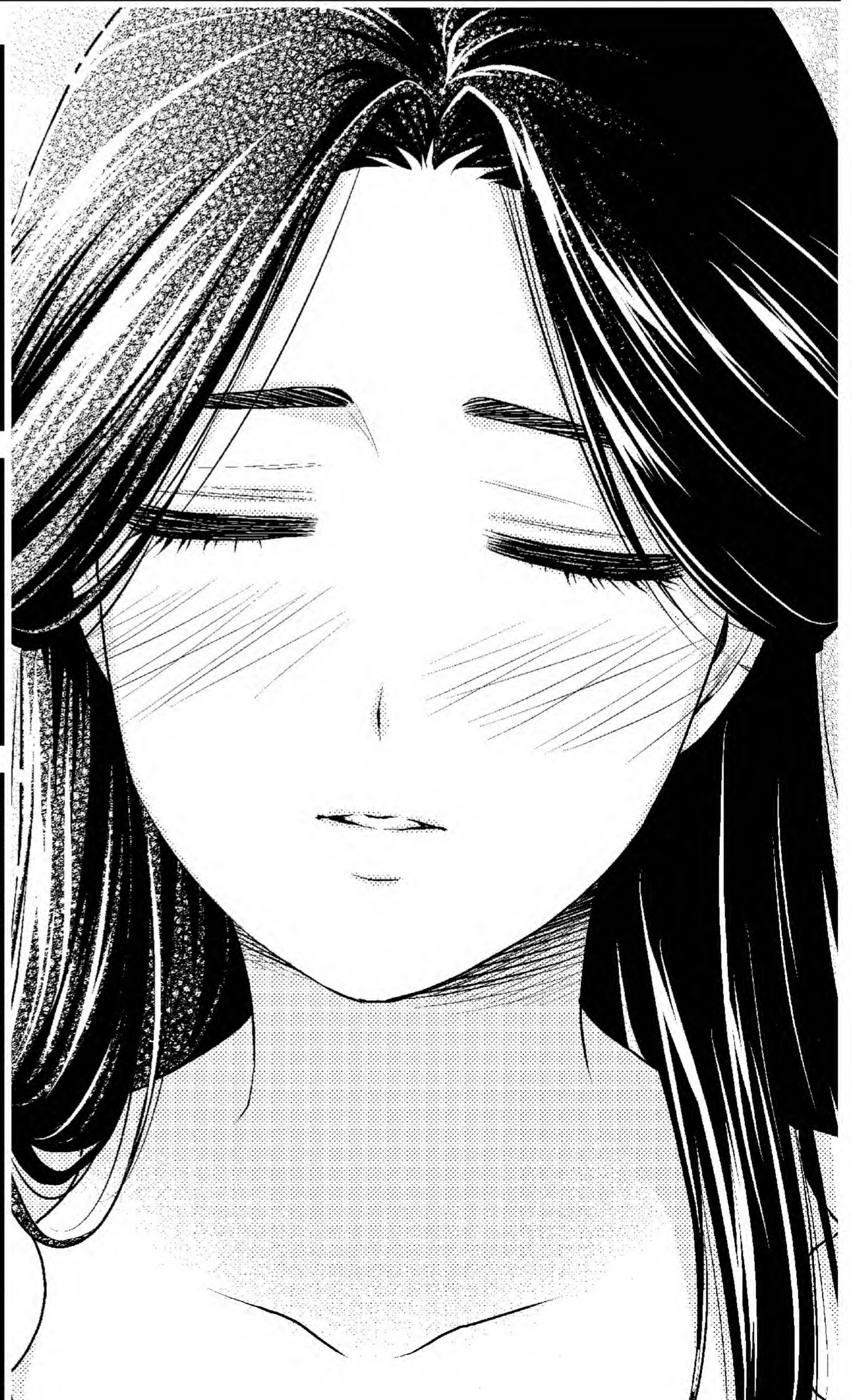
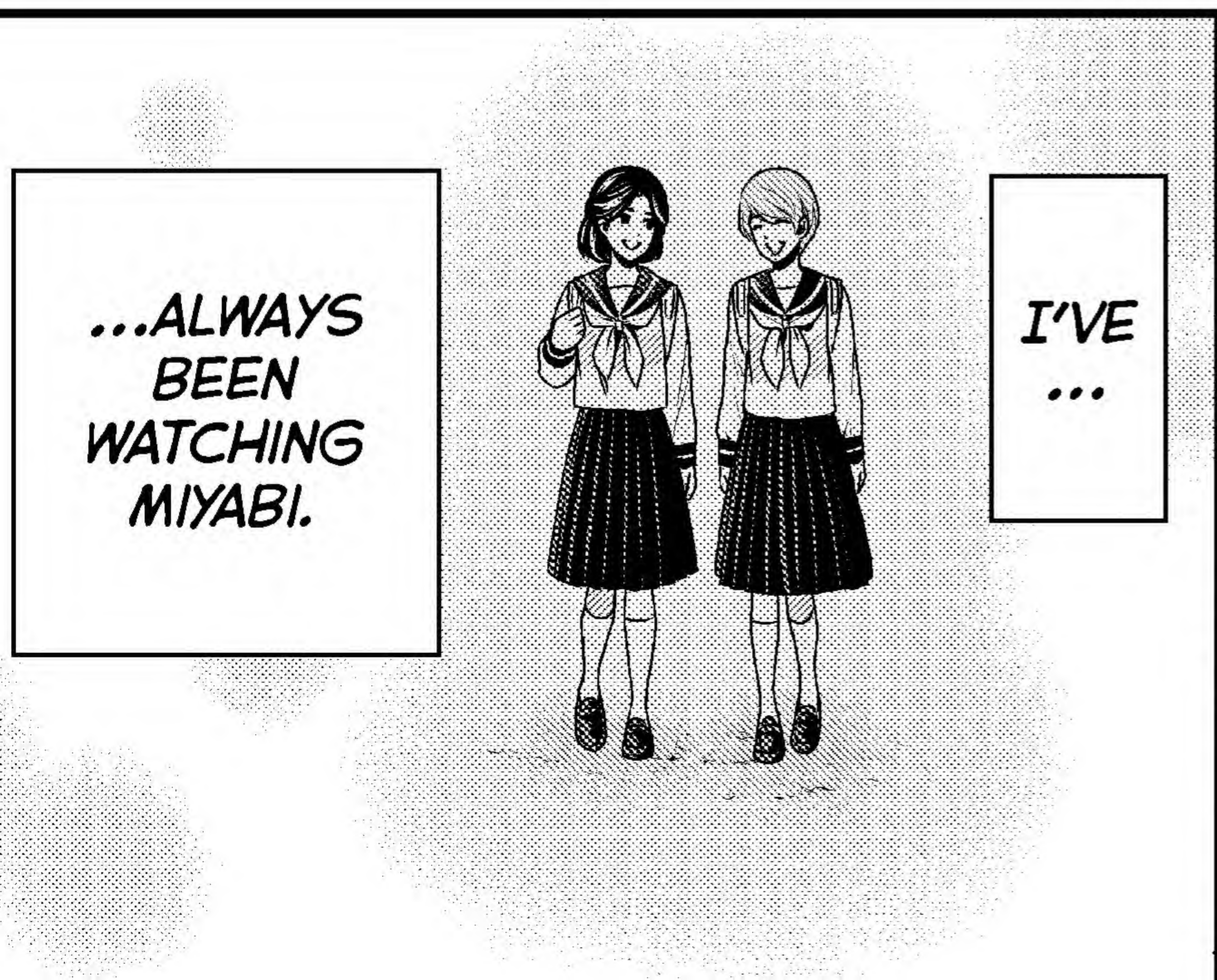
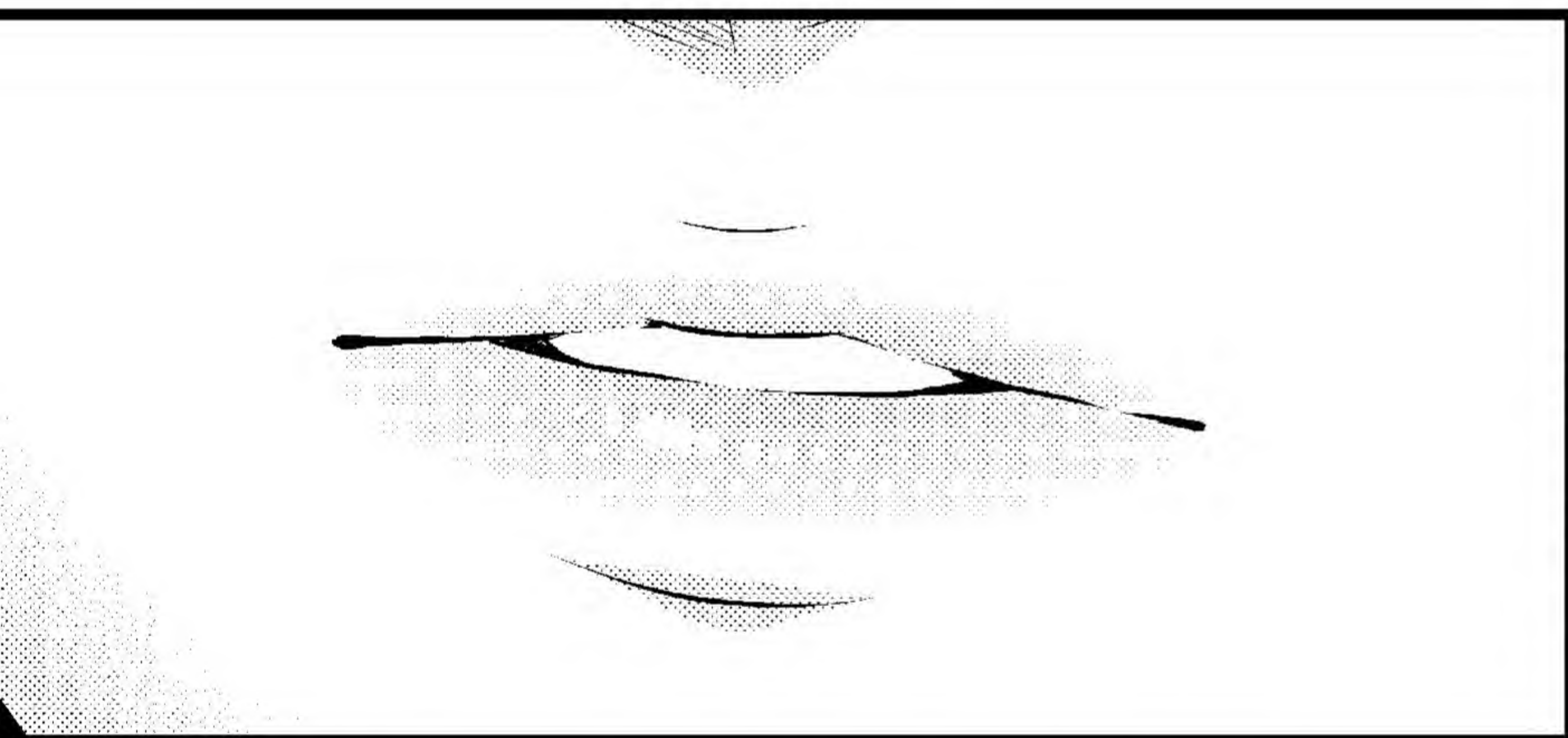
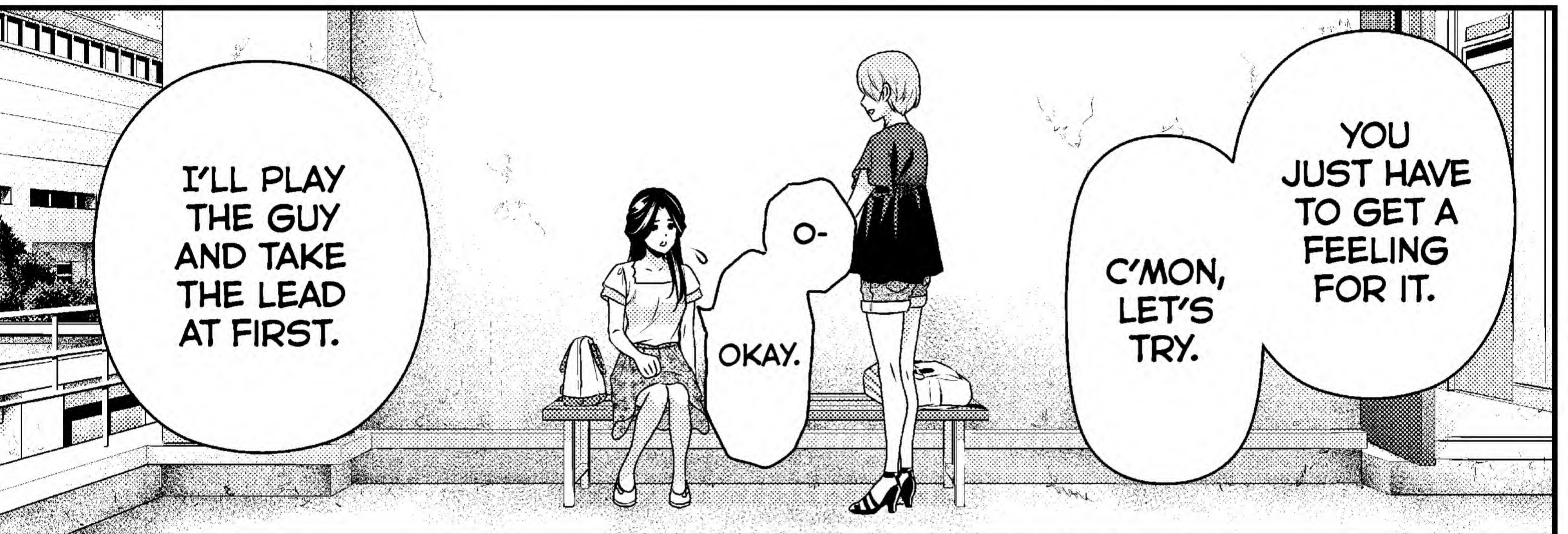
# DOMESTIC GIRL

18

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NO ONE  
KNOWS  
HER  
BETTER  
...

...  
THAN  
ME.



KIND,

AND  
CUTE.



SHE'S  
PROUD,

COMPETI-  
TIVE,

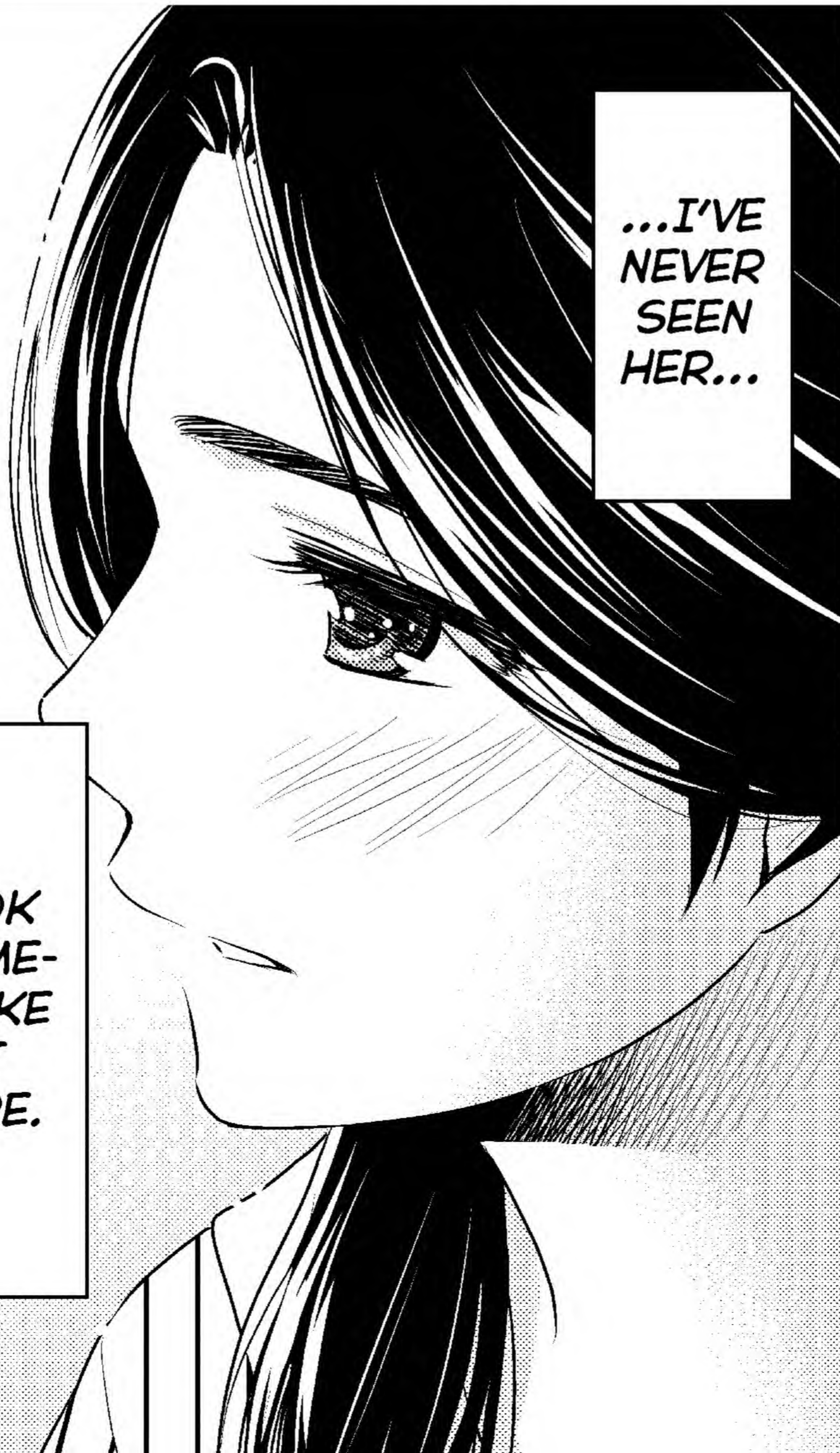
STUB-  
BORN,



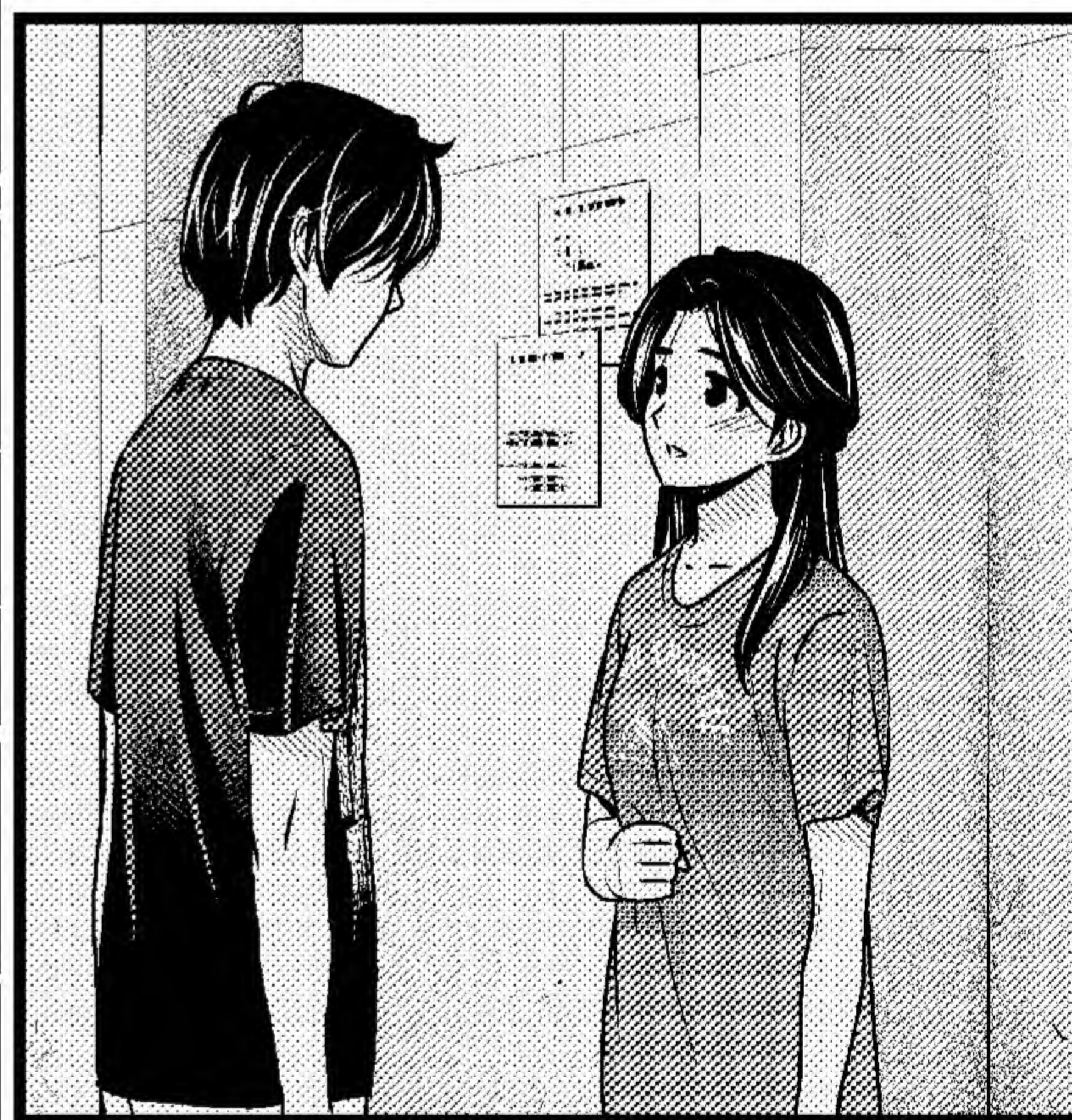
AND  
YET  
...



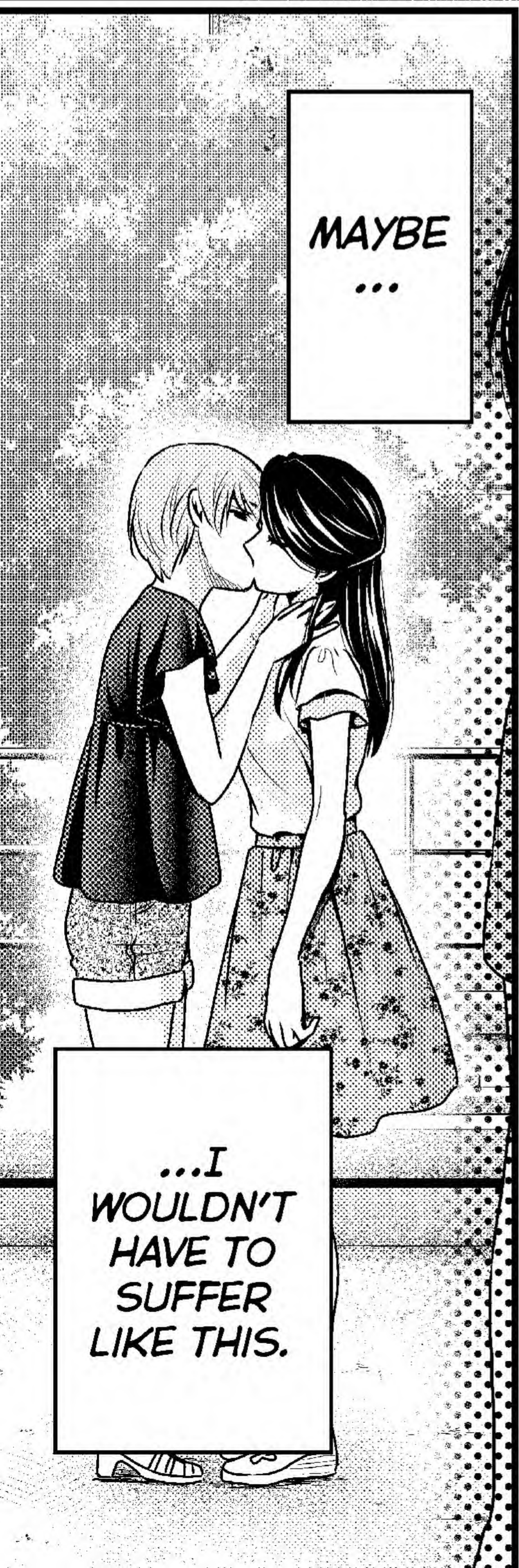
...LOOK  
AT SOME-  
ONE LIKE  
THAT  
BEFORE.



...I'VE  
NEVER  
SEEN  
HER...

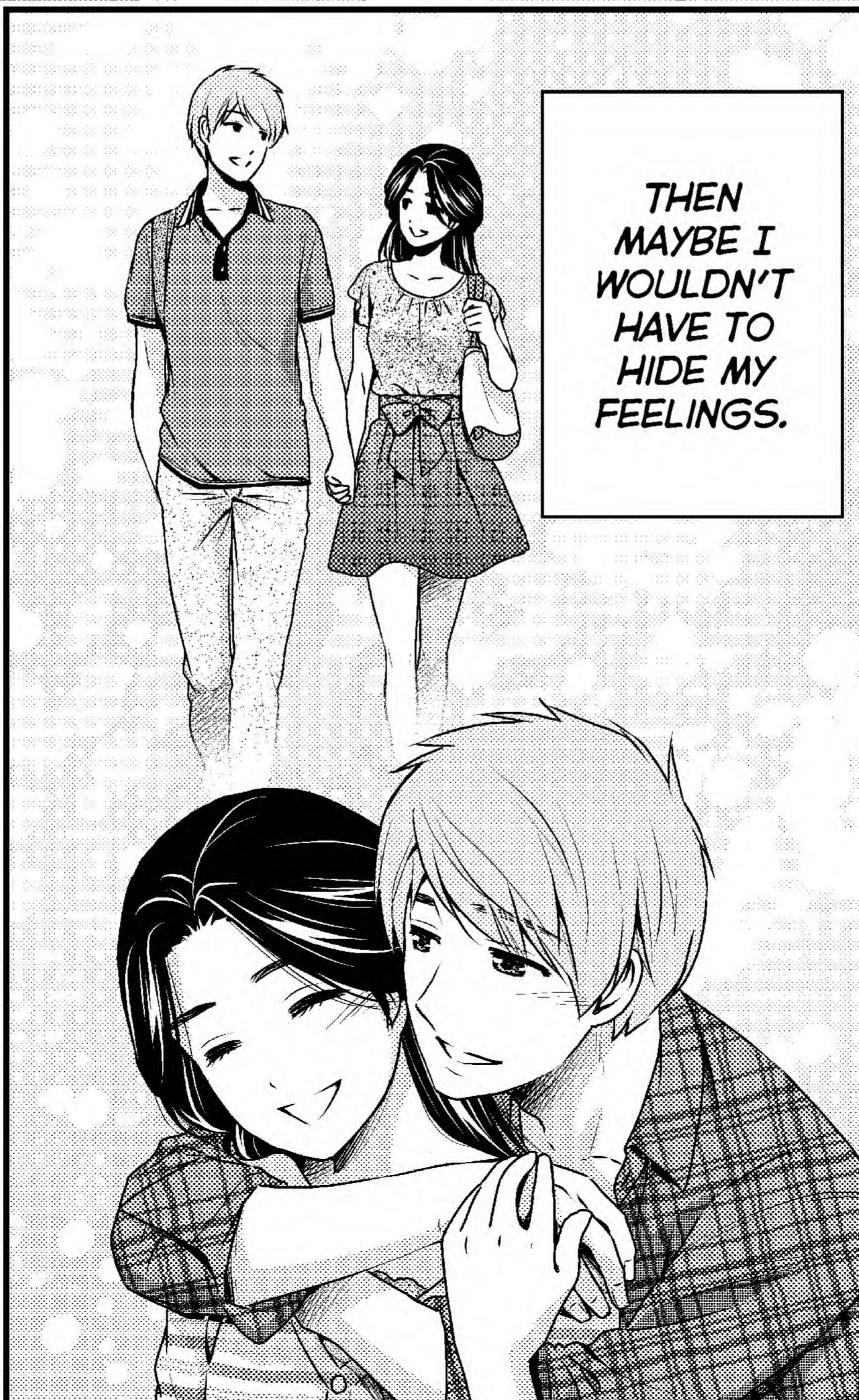






MAYBE  
...

...I  
WOULDN'T  
HAVE TO  
SUFFER  
LIKE THIS.



THEN  
MAYBE I  
WOULDN'T  
HAVE TO  
HIDE MY  
FEELINGS.

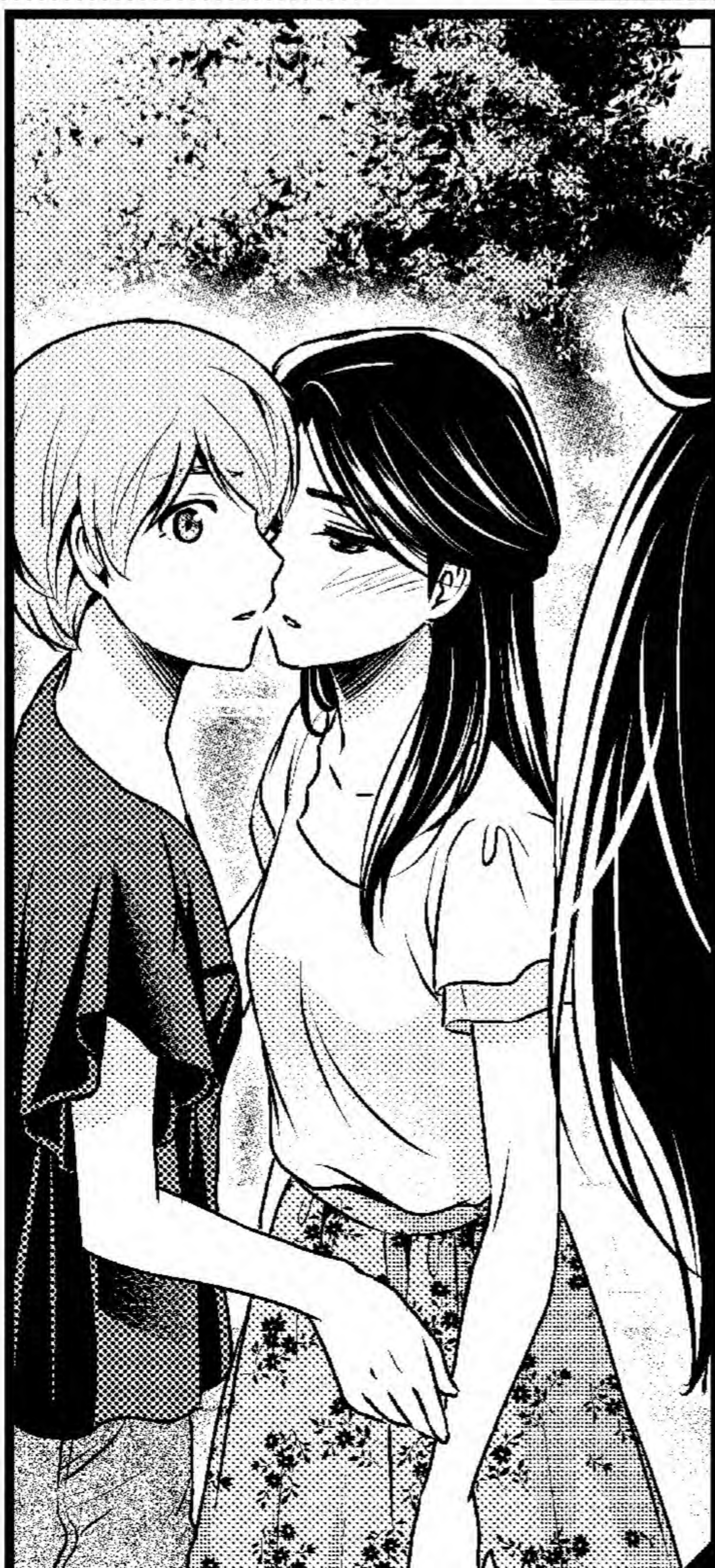
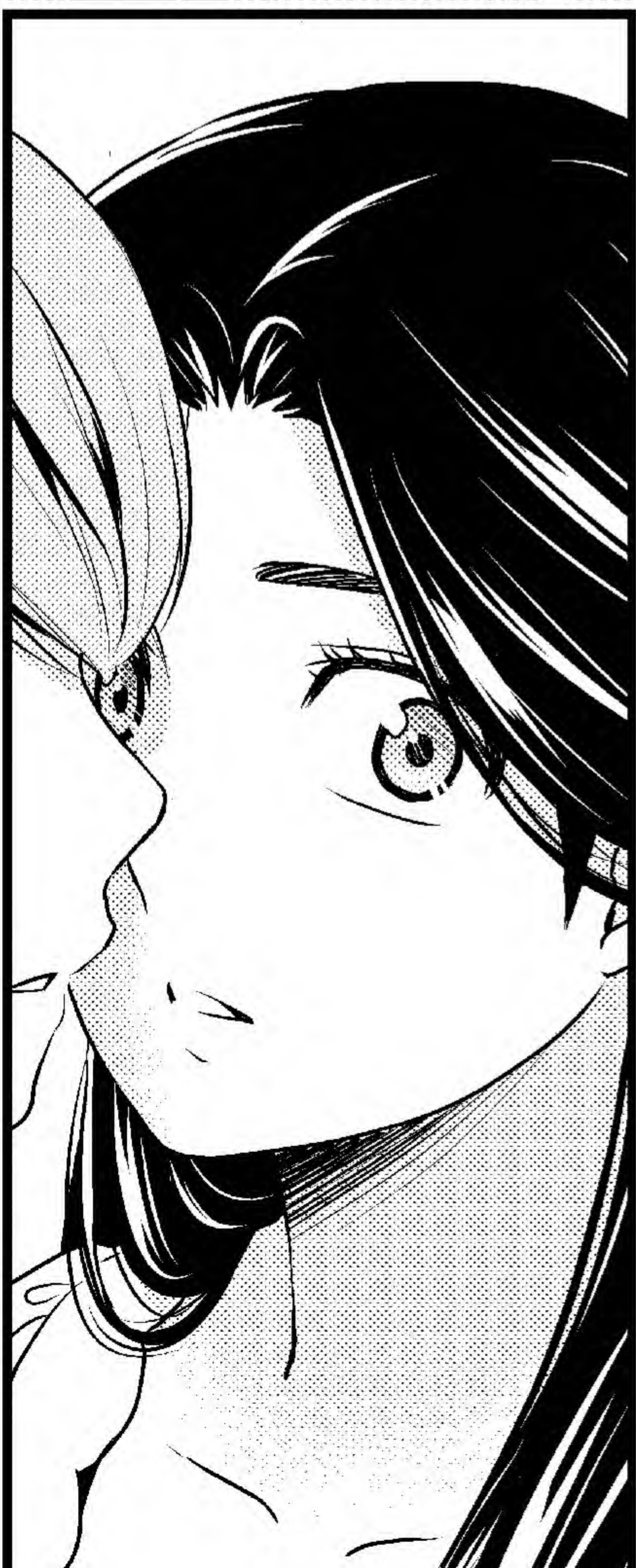


IF ONLY  
...

...I  
WERE  
A  
MAN.



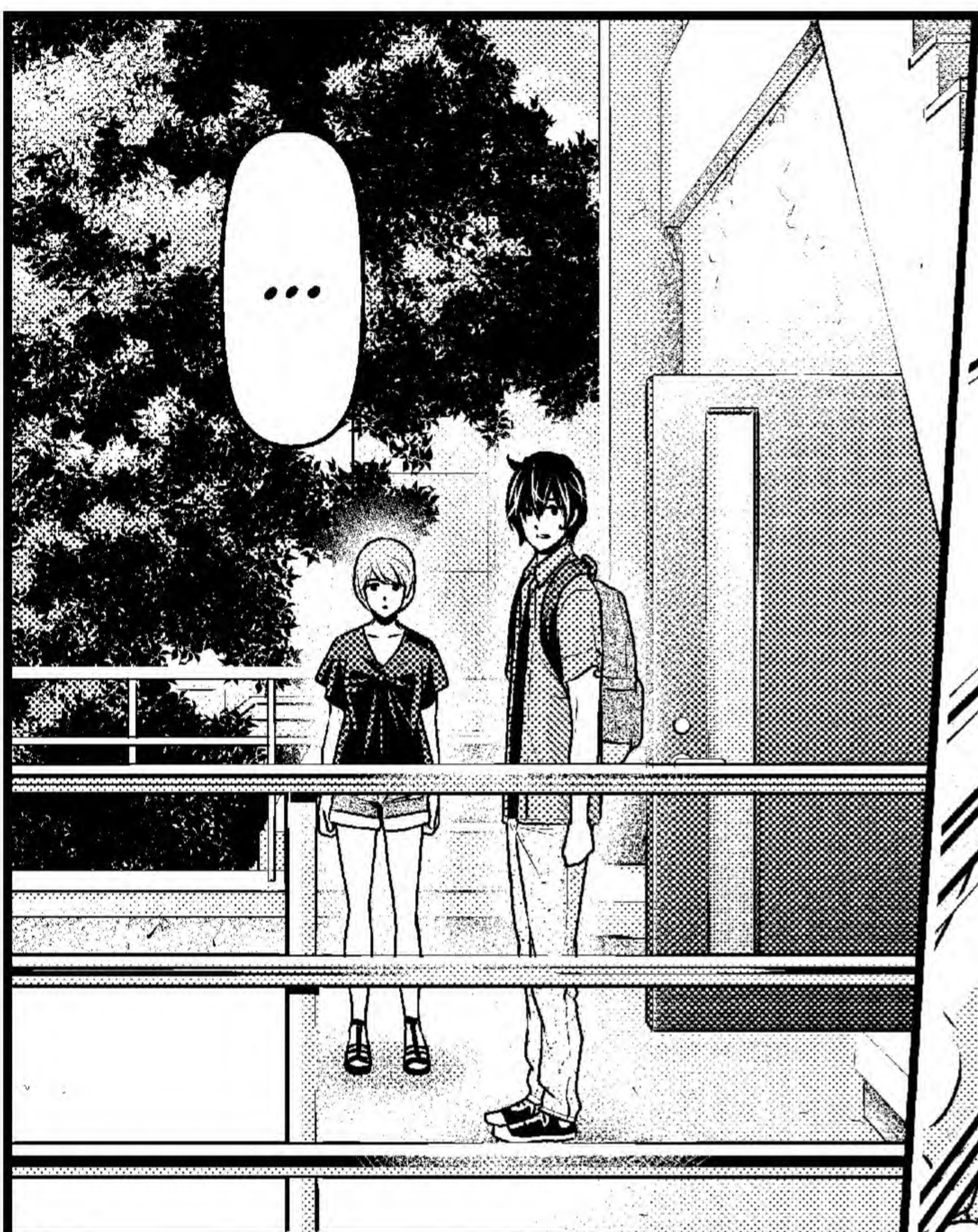
# CHAPTER 165: IF IT'S HOPELESS, THEN...















WHAT  
DO YOU  
THINK OF  
MIYABI?

HEY,  
FUJII-  
KUN.

HUH  
?



I  
RESPECT  
HER  
A LOT.

SHE'S AN  
IRREPLACE-  
ABLE  
TEAMMATE.



DON'T  
THINK  
TOO  
HARD  
ABOUT  
IT.

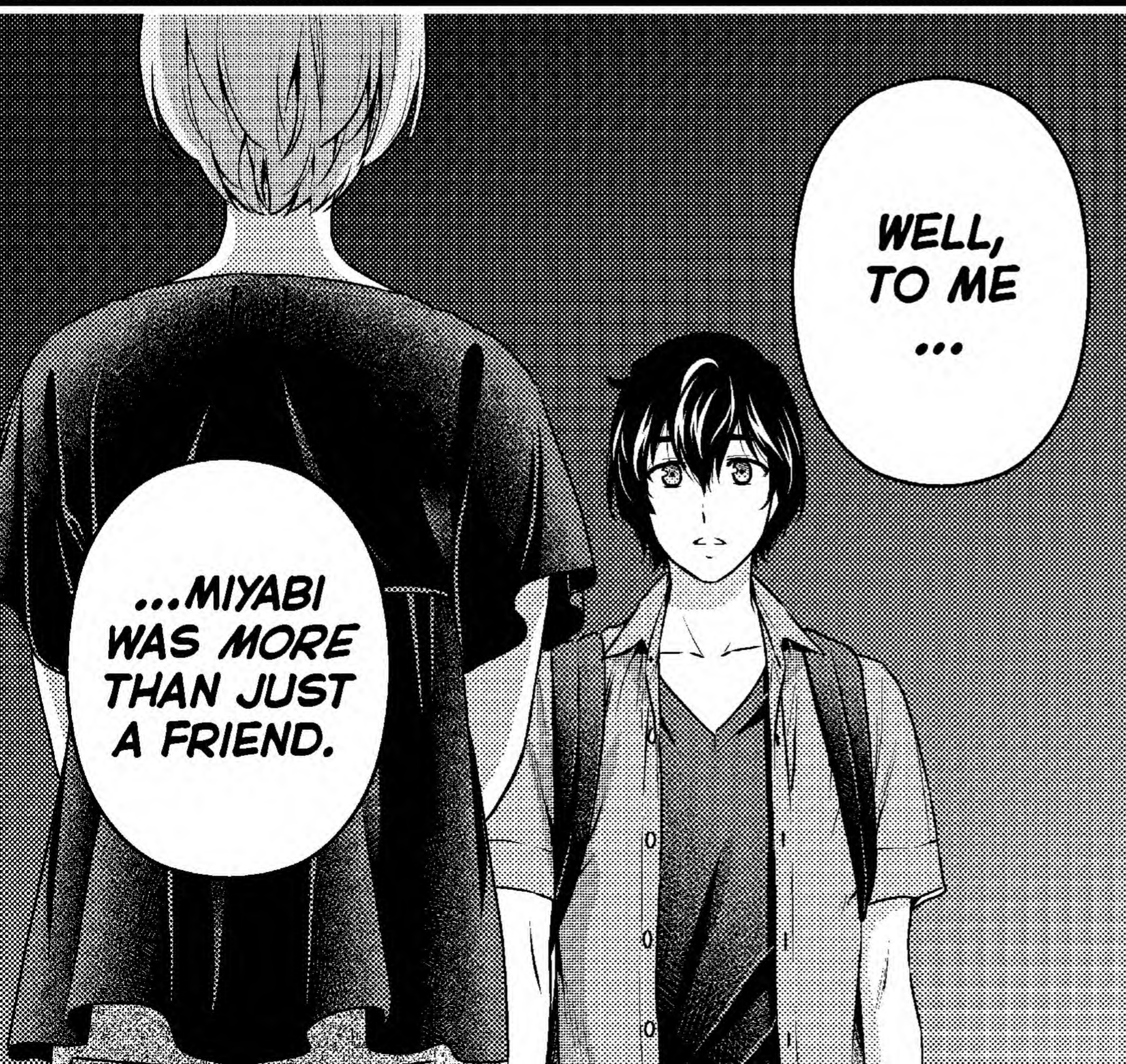
JUST BE  
HONEST.

WHAT  
?



SHE CAN BE  
PRETTY STUB-  
BORN, BUT I  
THINK SHE'S  
INCREDIBLY  
EXPRESSIVE.

WELL  
...



WELL,  
TO ME  
...

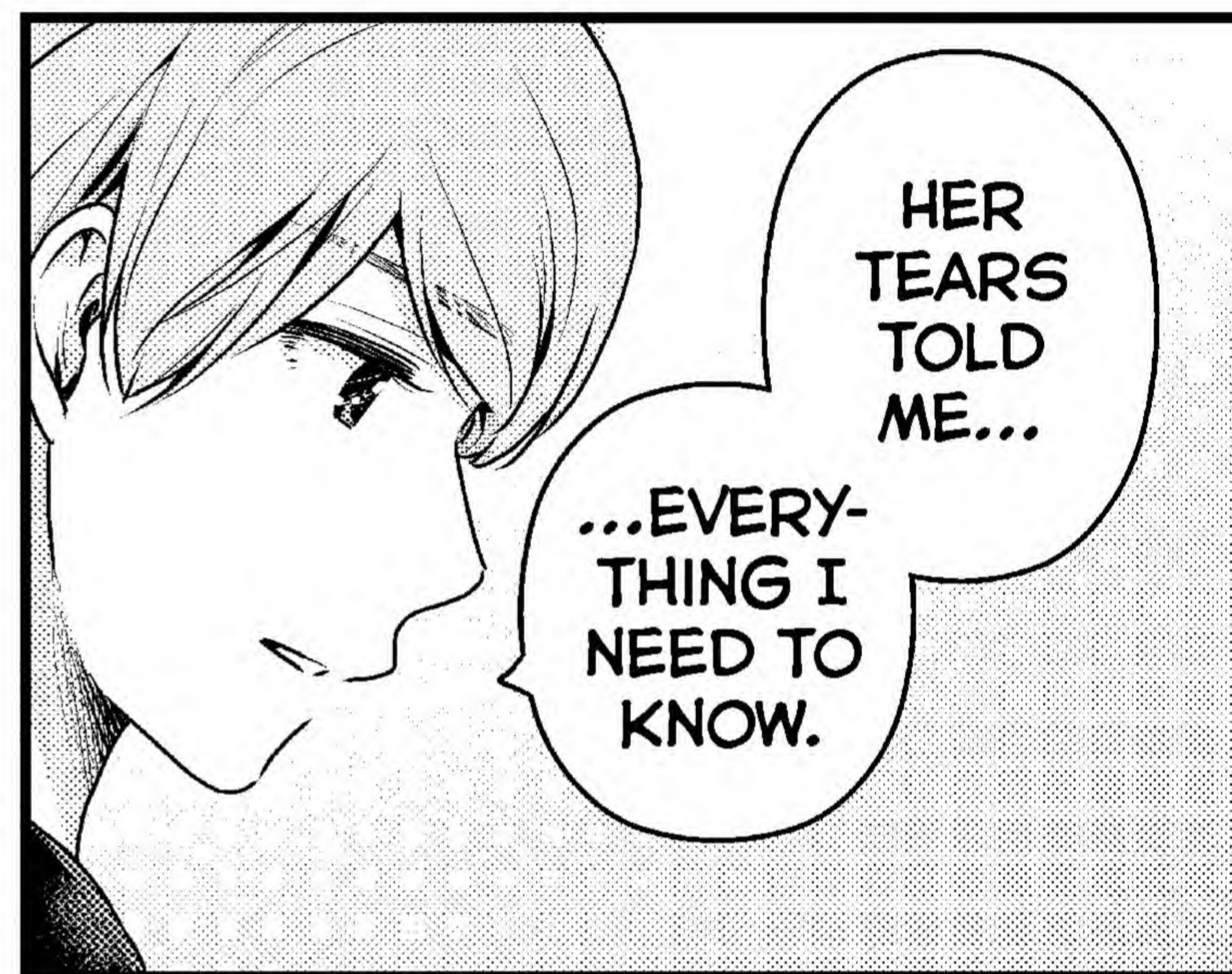
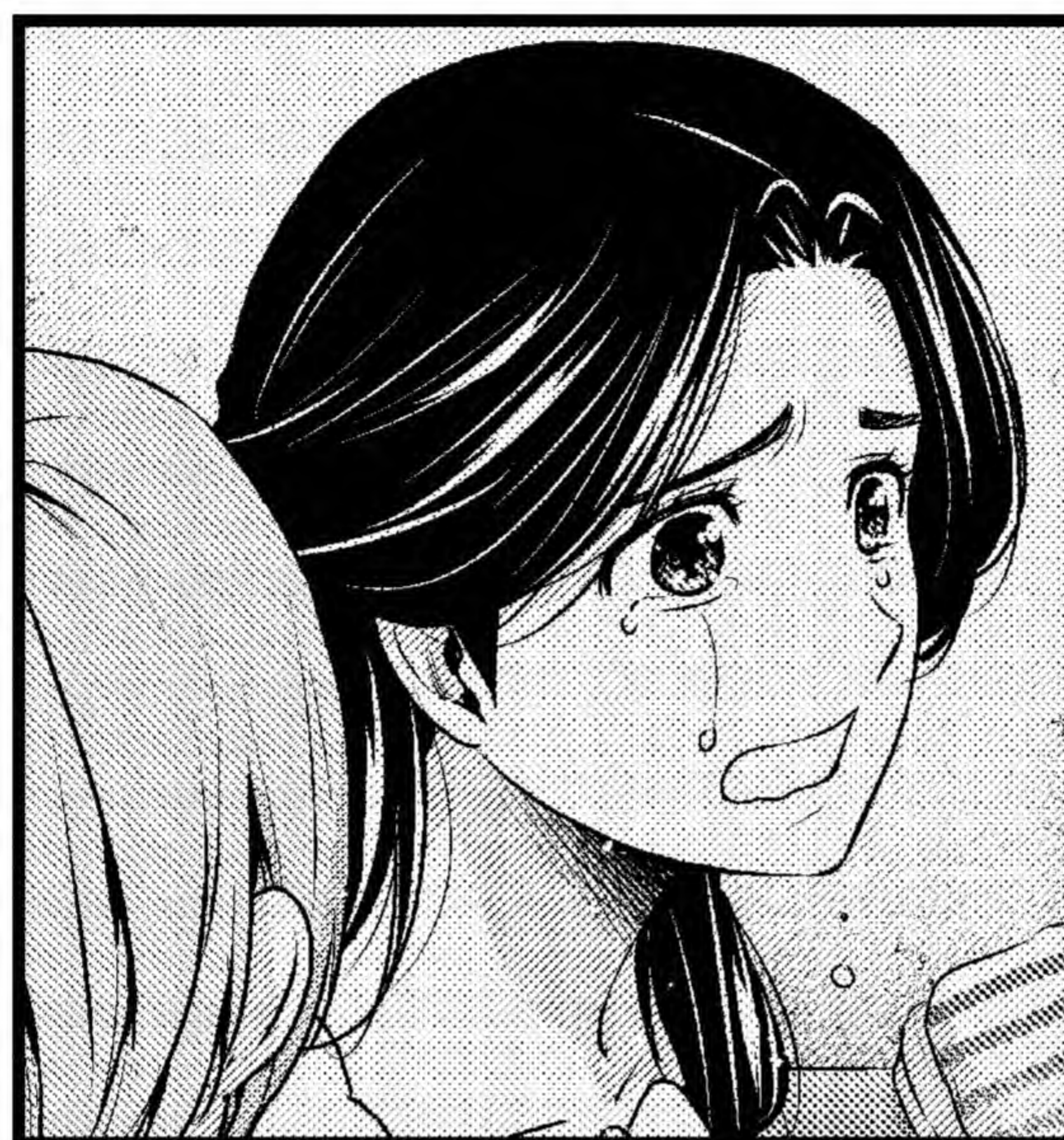
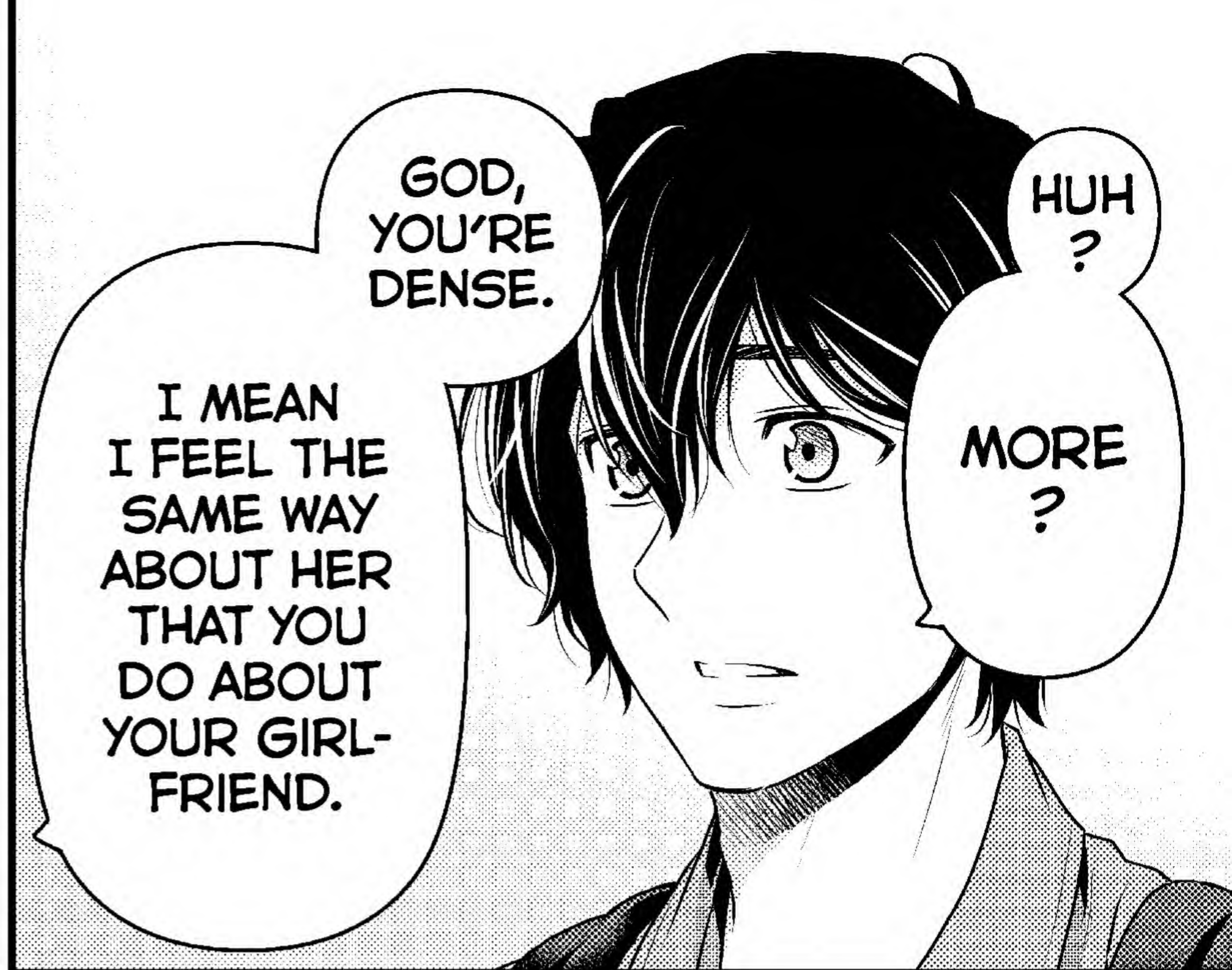
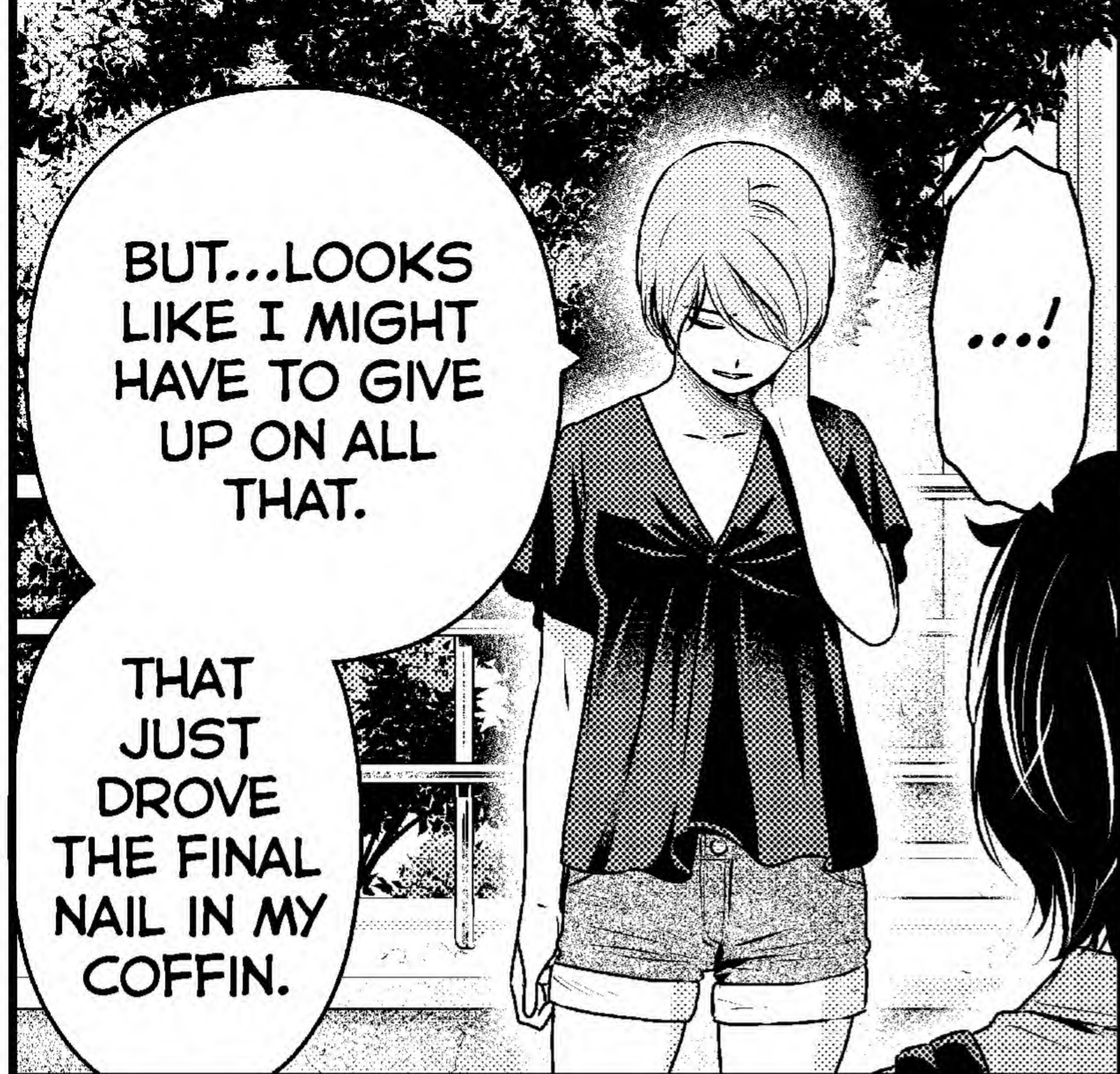
...MIYABI  
WAS MORE  
THAN JUST  
A FRIEND.



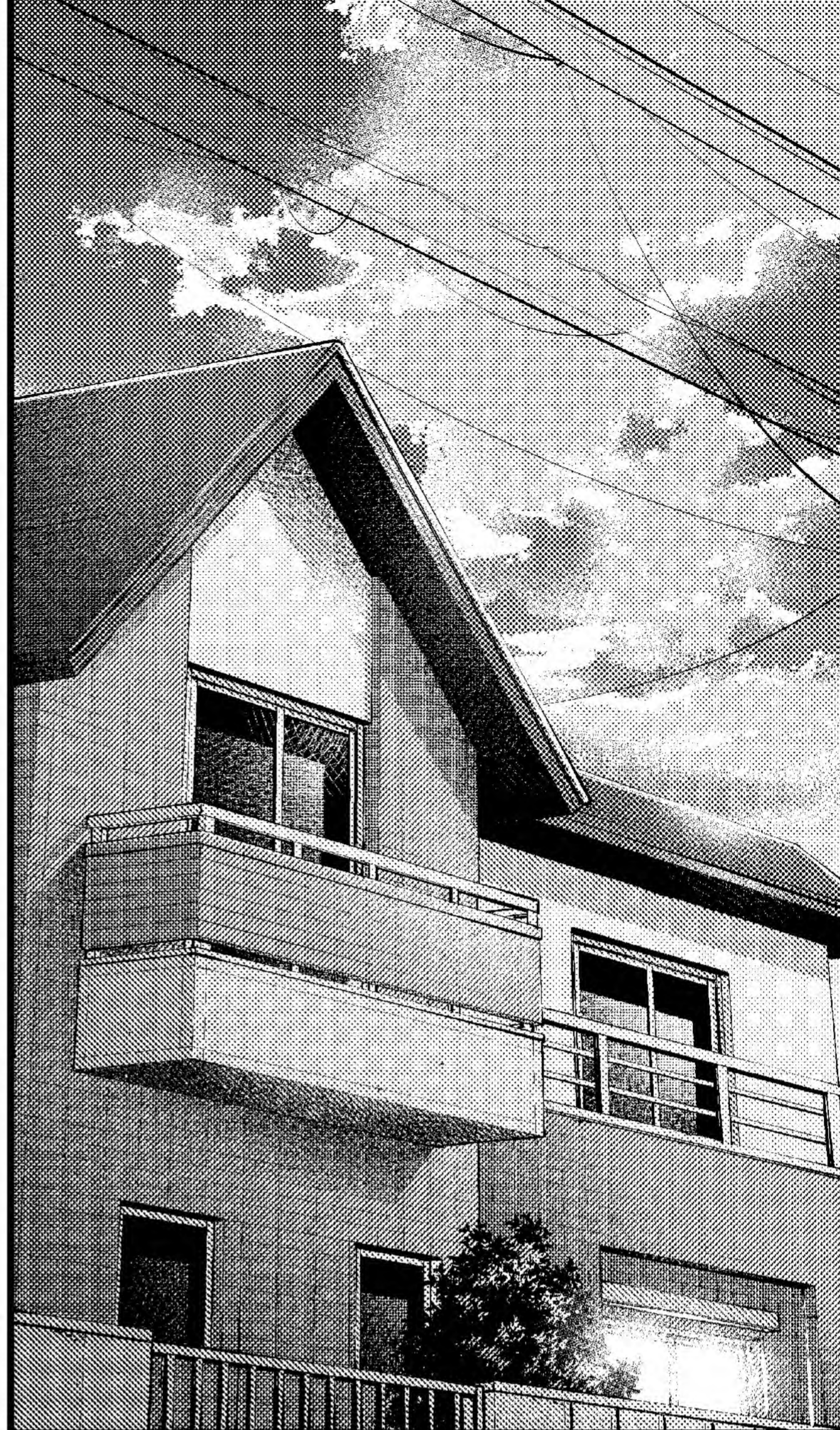
HMM.

YOU'RE A  
NICE GUY,  
FUJII-KUN.

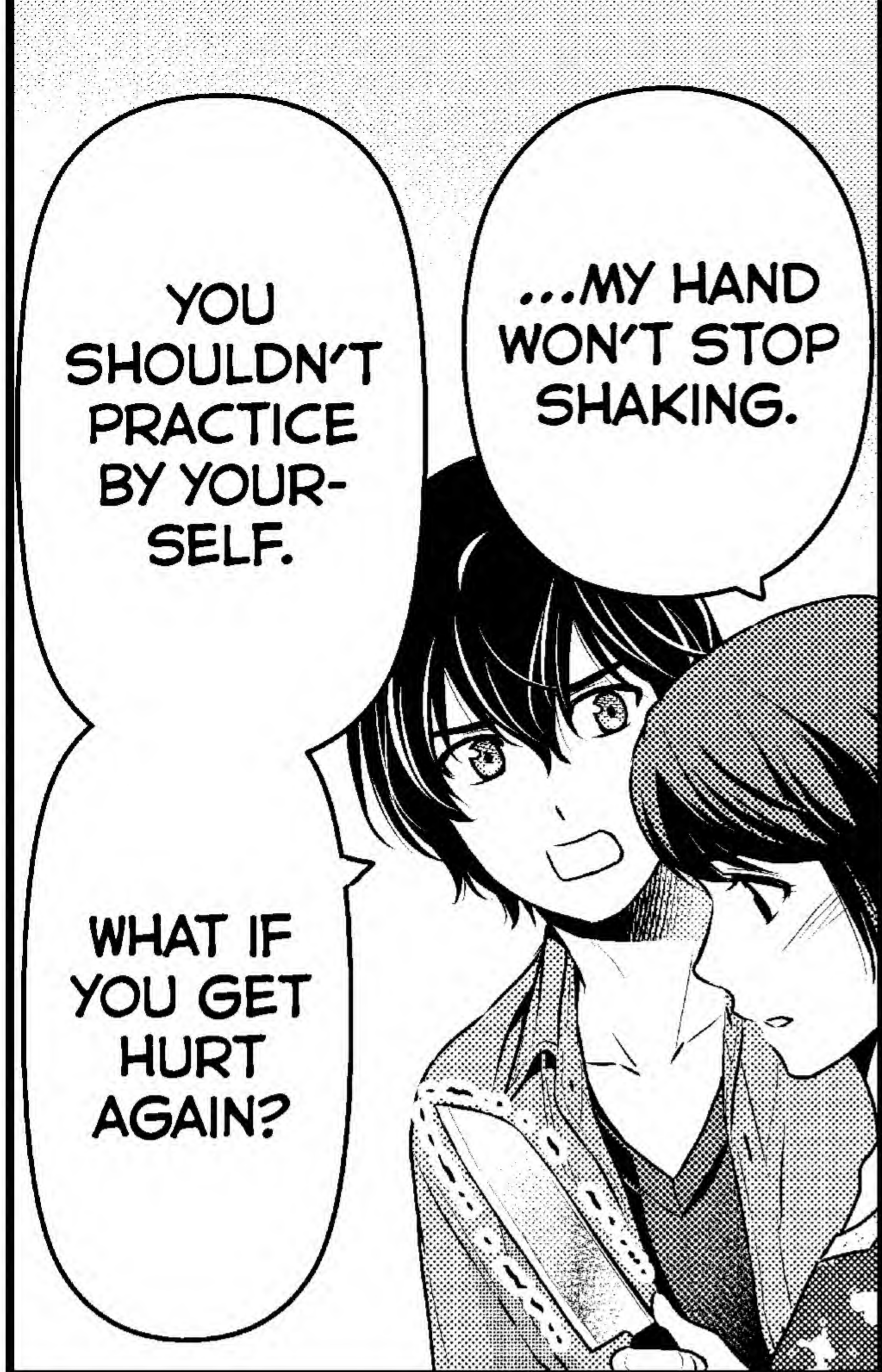












YOU  
SHOULDN'T  
PRACTICE  
BY YOUR-  
SELF.

...MY HAND  
WON'T STOP  
SHAKING.

WHAT IF  
YOU GET  
HURT  
AGAIN?



BUT  
...

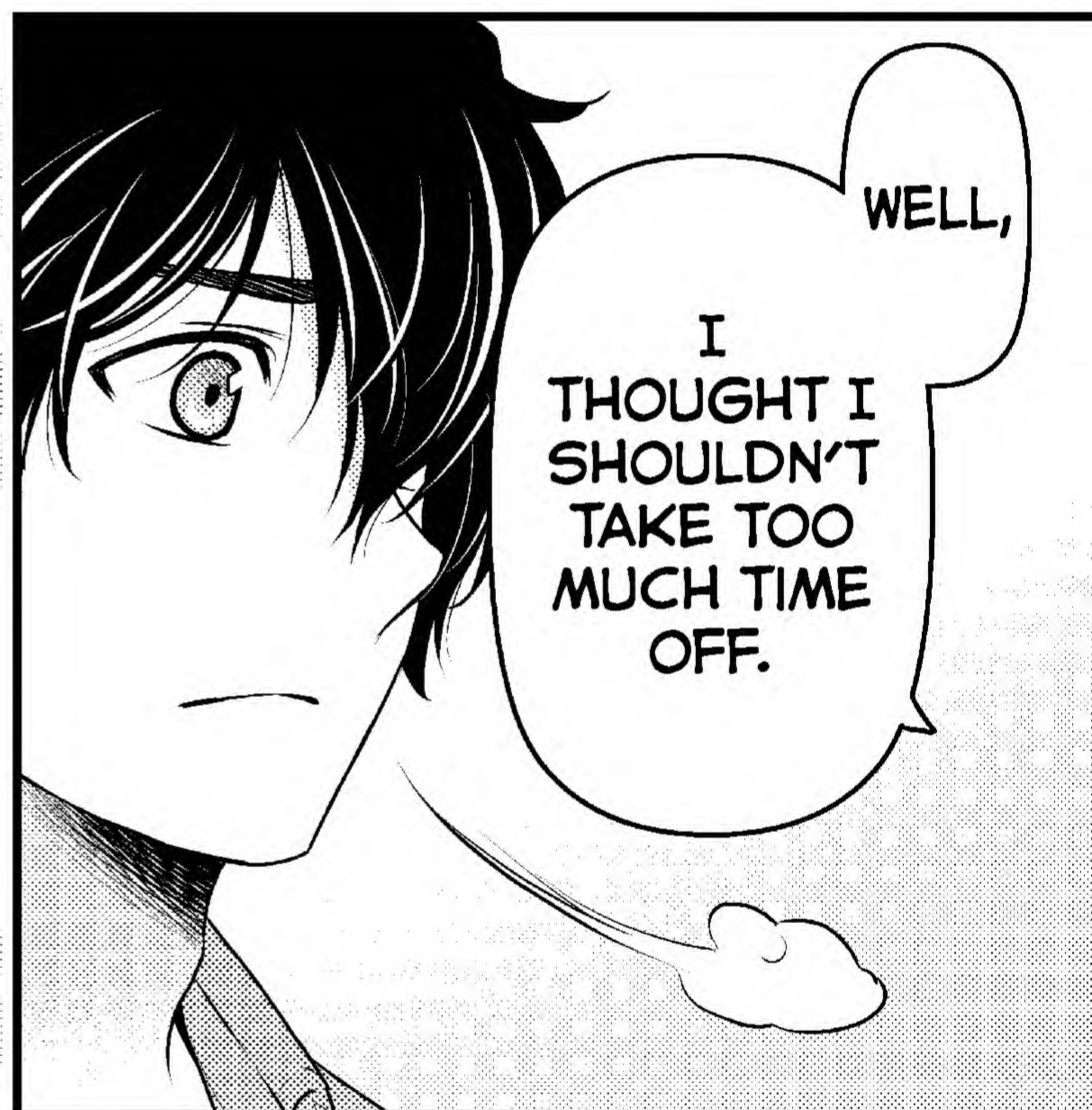


I'VE  
TRIED A  
FEW TIMES  
SINCE  
LUNCH,  
BUT...

I'M TRYING  
TO GET  
BACK INTO  
THE SWING  
OF THINGS  
A LITTLE.



I'LL  
COME  
HOME  
EARLY  
IF YOU  
DO.



WELL,

I  
THOUGHT I  
SHOULDN'T  
TAKE TOO  
MUCH TIME  
OFF.



THEN AT  
LEAST  
TOSS ME A  
MESSAGE  
ON LINE.









I'M  
GLAD  
YOU'RE  
MY BOY-  
FRIEND  
...

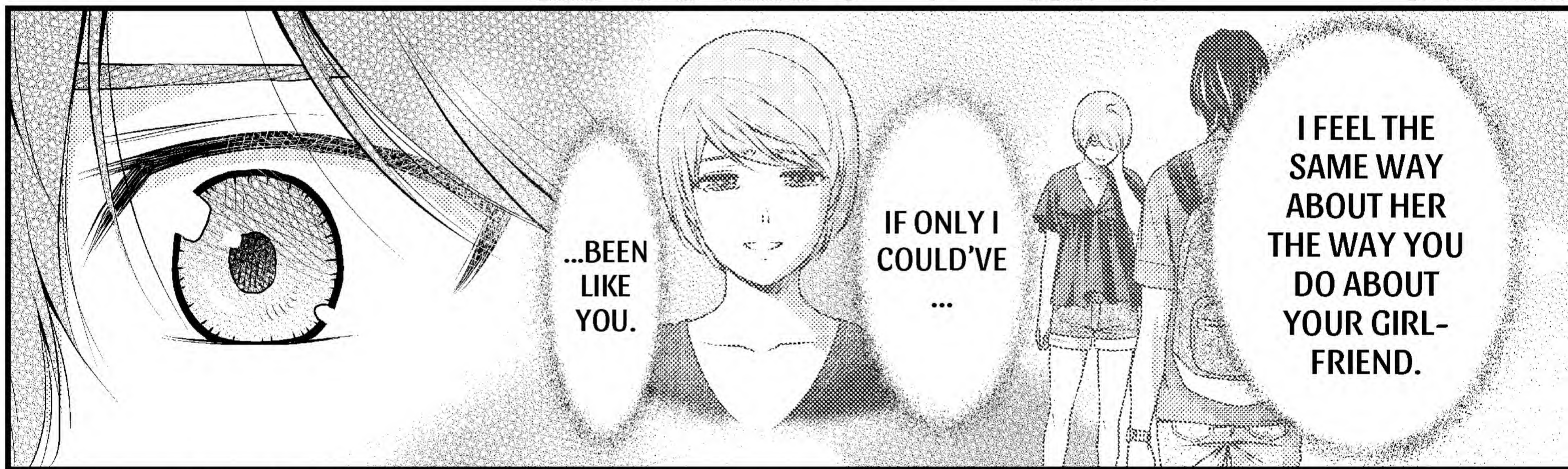
OH.

I GUESS  
YOU'RE MY  
"BROTHER"  
RIGHT NOW,  
HUH?



JUST  
HAVING YOU  
WITH ME  
WAS REALLY  
REASSUR-  
ING.

...HOW NICE  
IT IS TO HAVE  
SOMEONE  
TO LEAN ON  
WHEN THINGS  
GET ROUGH.



...BEEN  
LIKE  
YOU.

IF ONLY I  
COULD'VE  
...

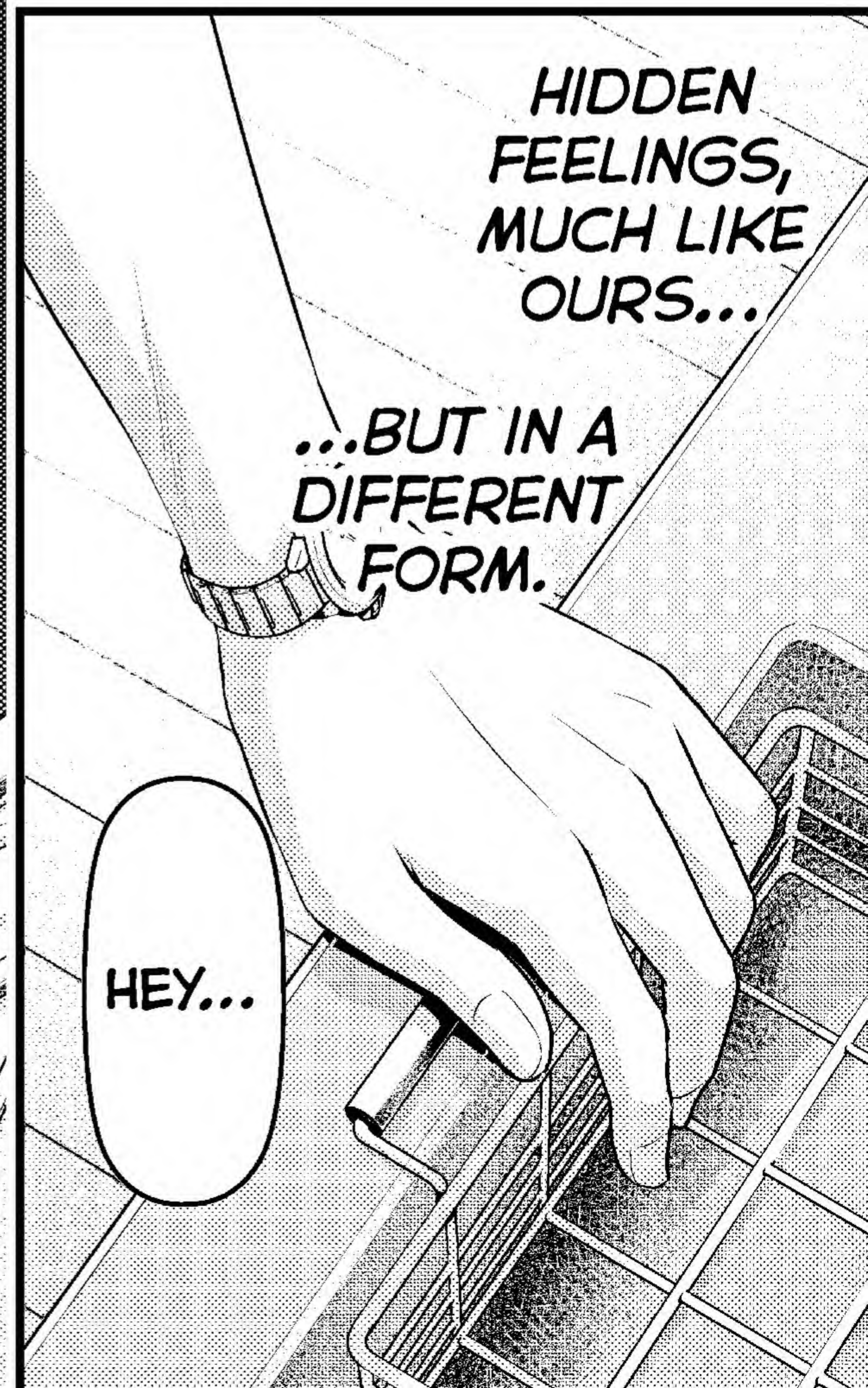
I FEEL THE  
SAME WAY  
ABOUT HER  
THE WAY YOU  
DO ABOUT  
YOUR GIRL-  
FRIEND.



...OR GUYS,  
FOR THAT  
MATTER...

IF WE  
WERE  
BOTH  
GIRLS  
...

...DO YOU  
THINK  
WE STILL  
WOULD'VE  
ENDED UP  
TOGETHER  
?



HIDDEN  
FEELINGS,  
MUCH LIKE  
OURS...

...BUT IN A  
DIFFERENT  
FORM.

HEY...





...WHEN  
I THINK  
BACK...

...ON  
EVERYTHING  
THAT'S  
HAPPENED  
UNTIL NOW  
...



BUT  
...



HMM.

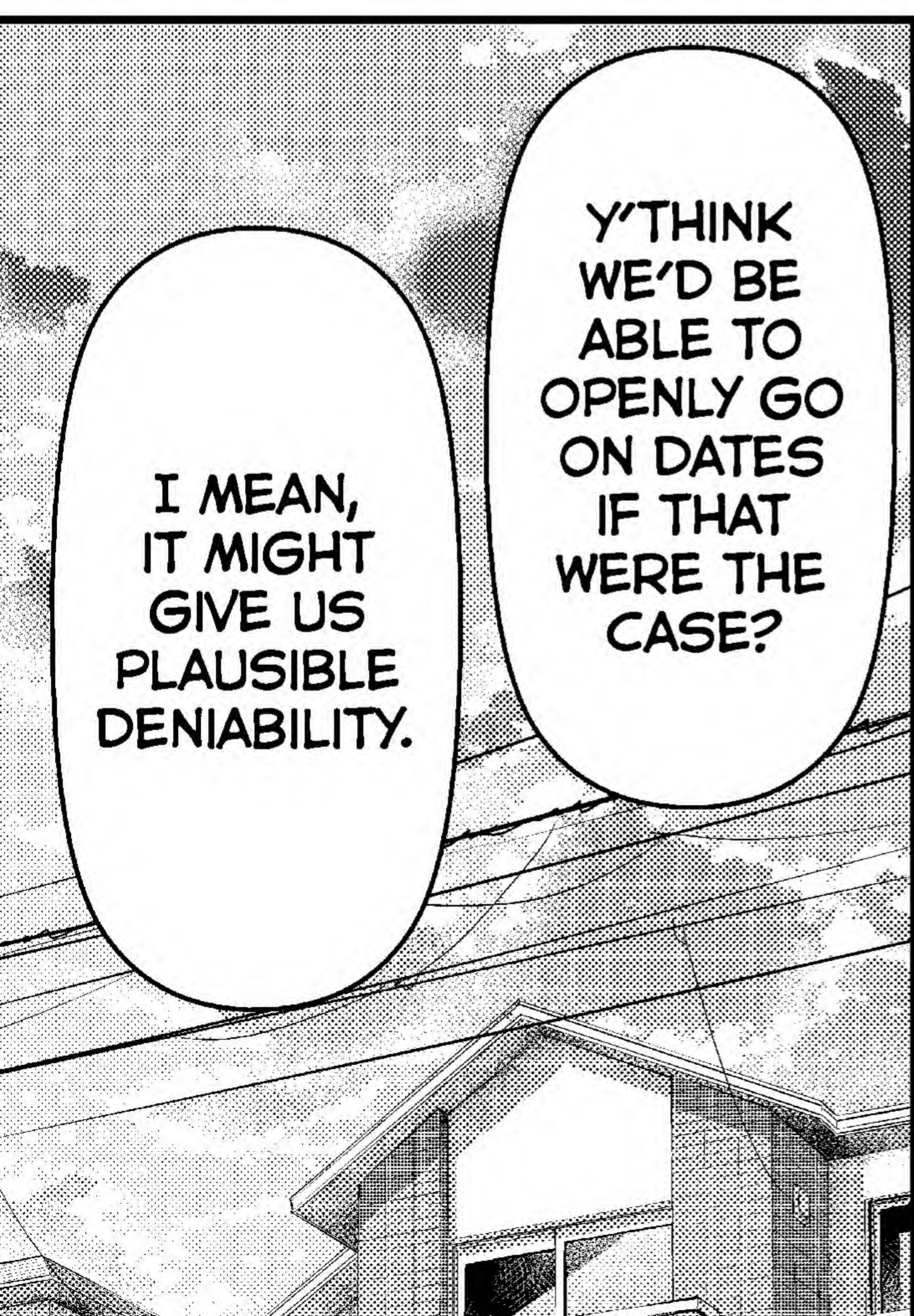
THAT'S  
A TOUGH  
QUES-  
TION.

WE'RE NOT,  
SO I CAN'T  
SAY FOR  
SURE.



I  
SEE.

...



I MEAN,  
IT MIGHT  
GIVE US  
PLAUSIBLE  
DENIABILITY.

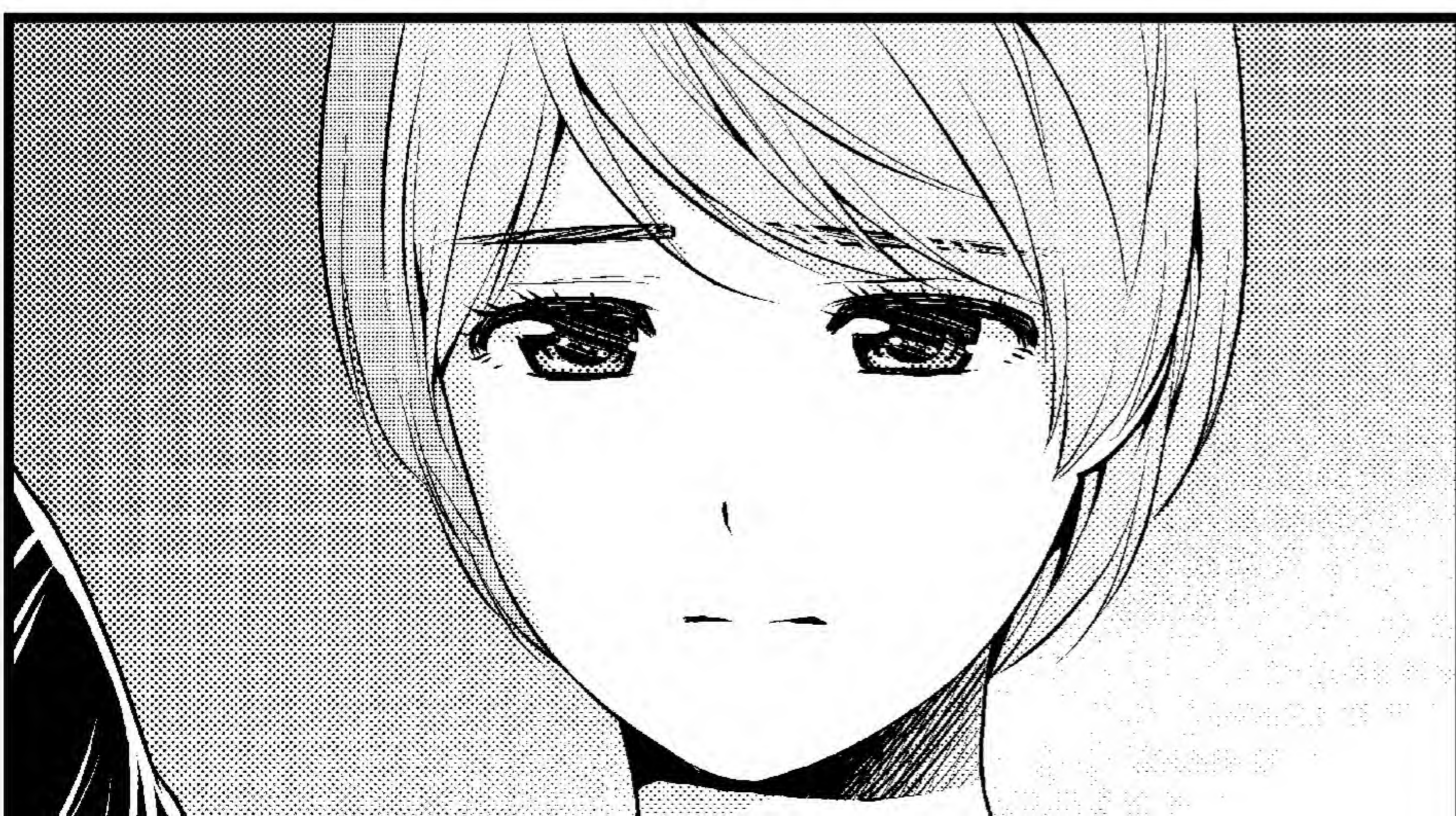
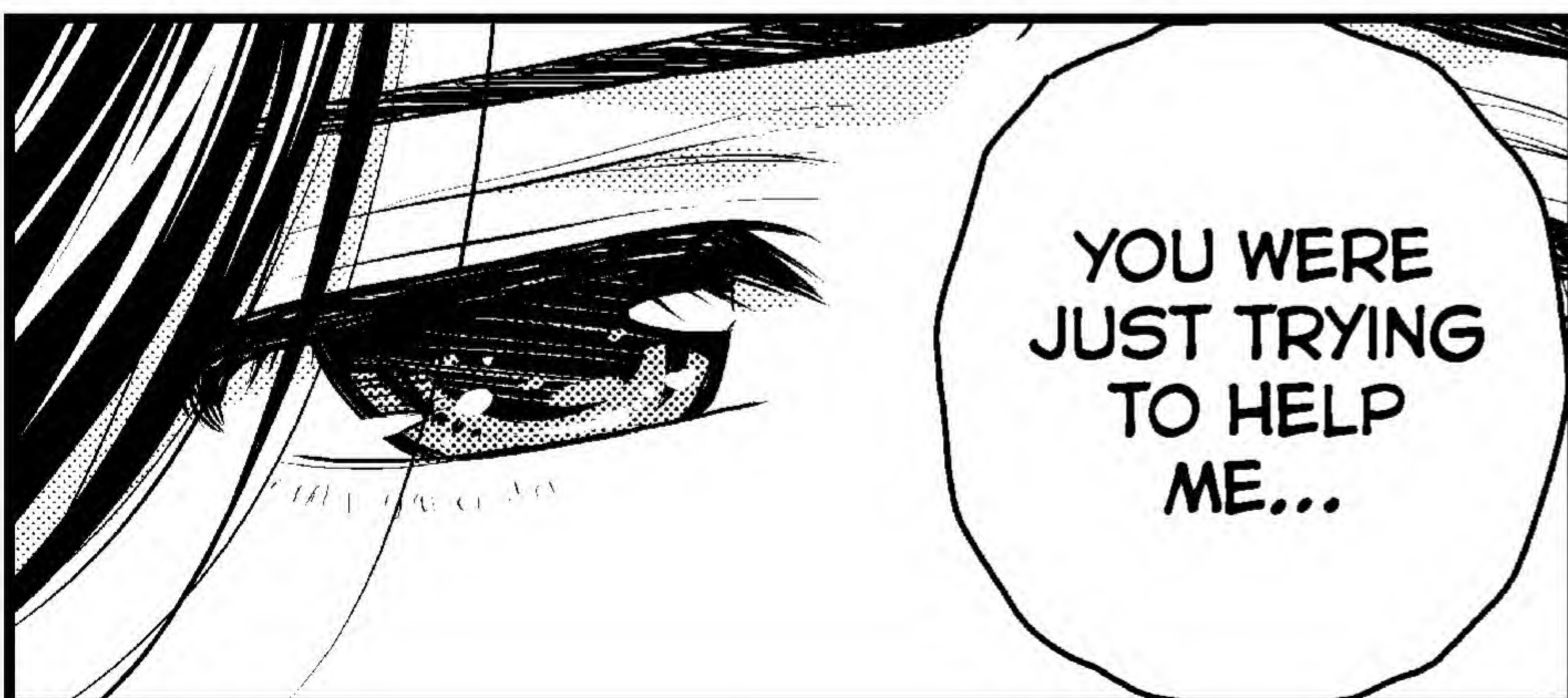
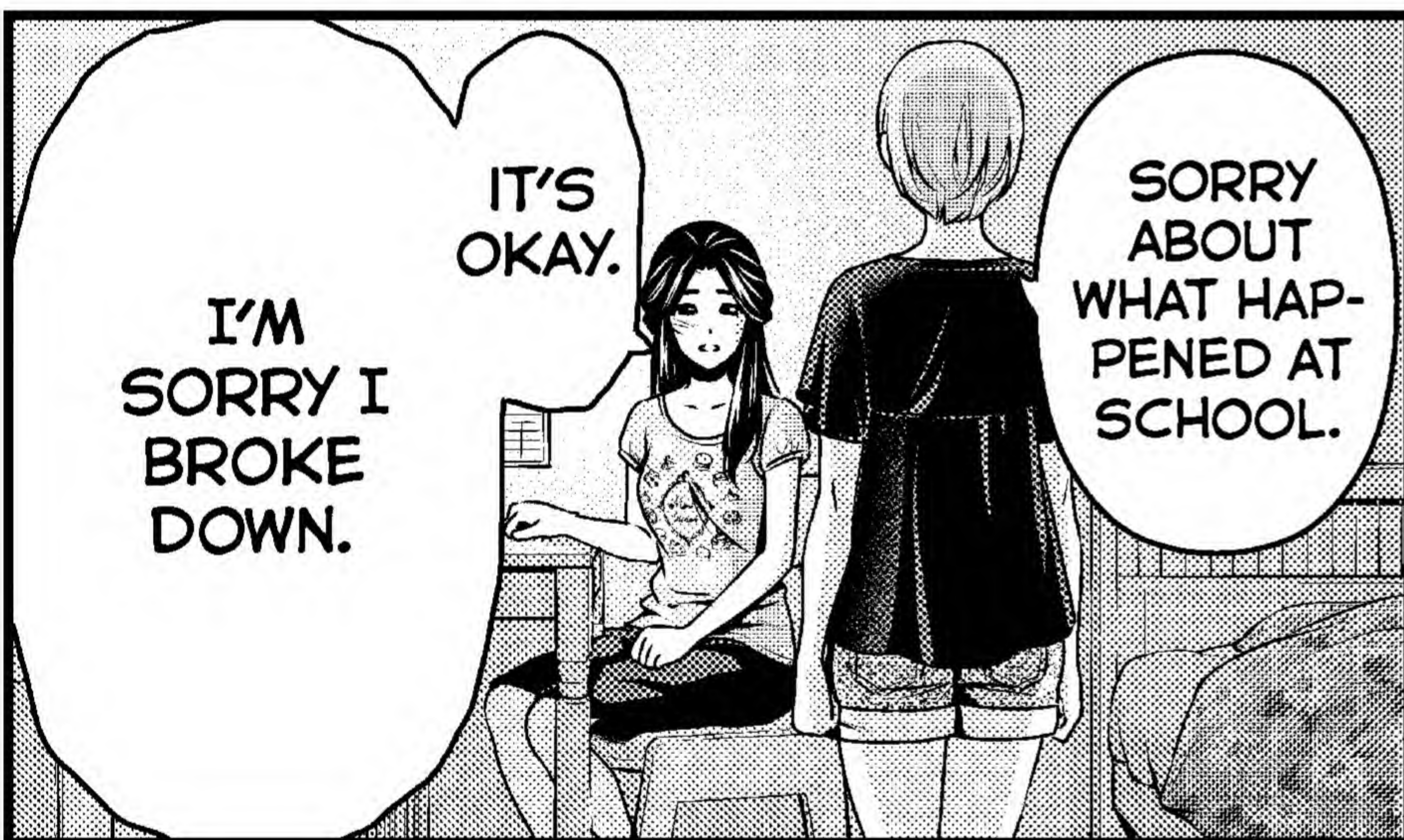
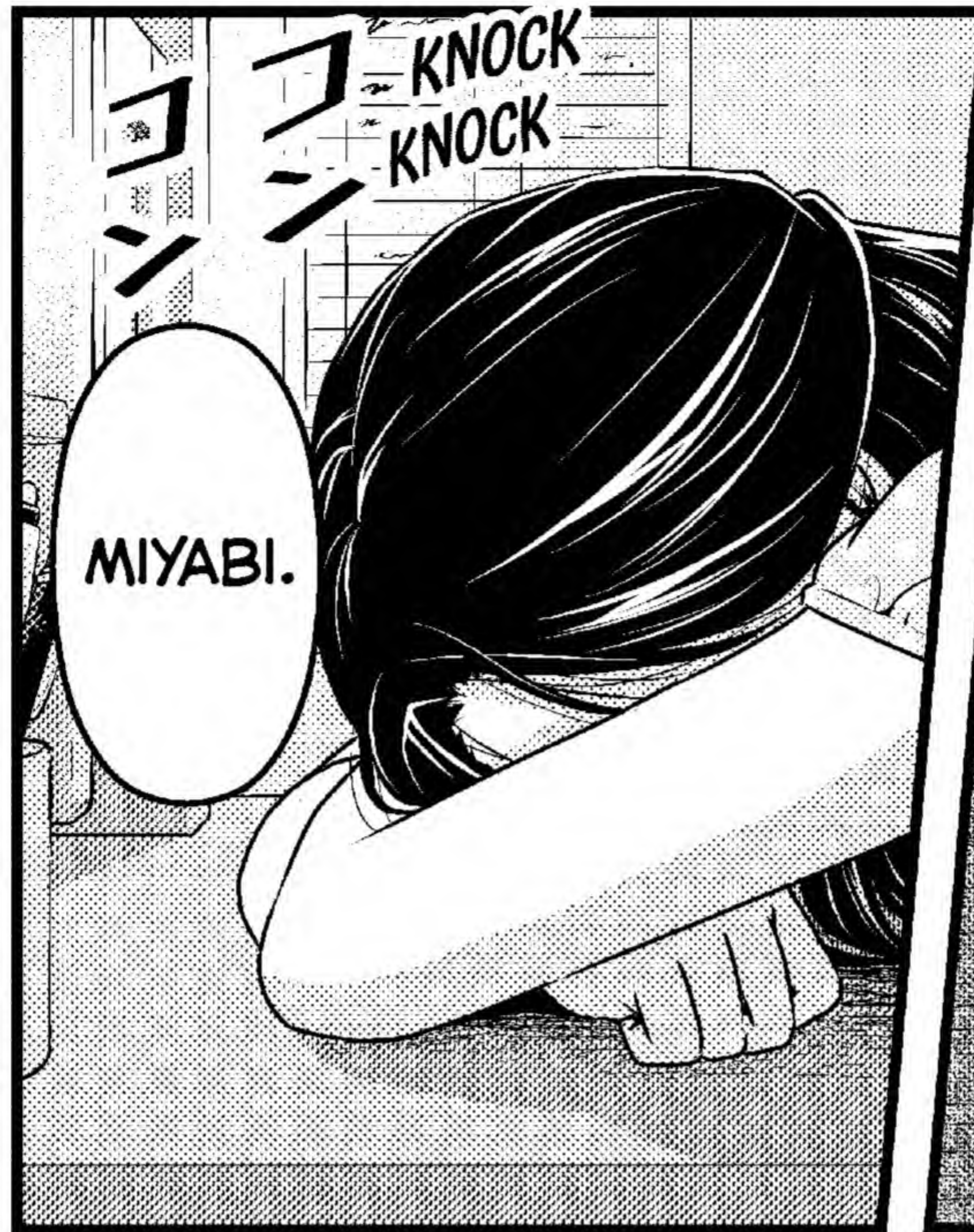
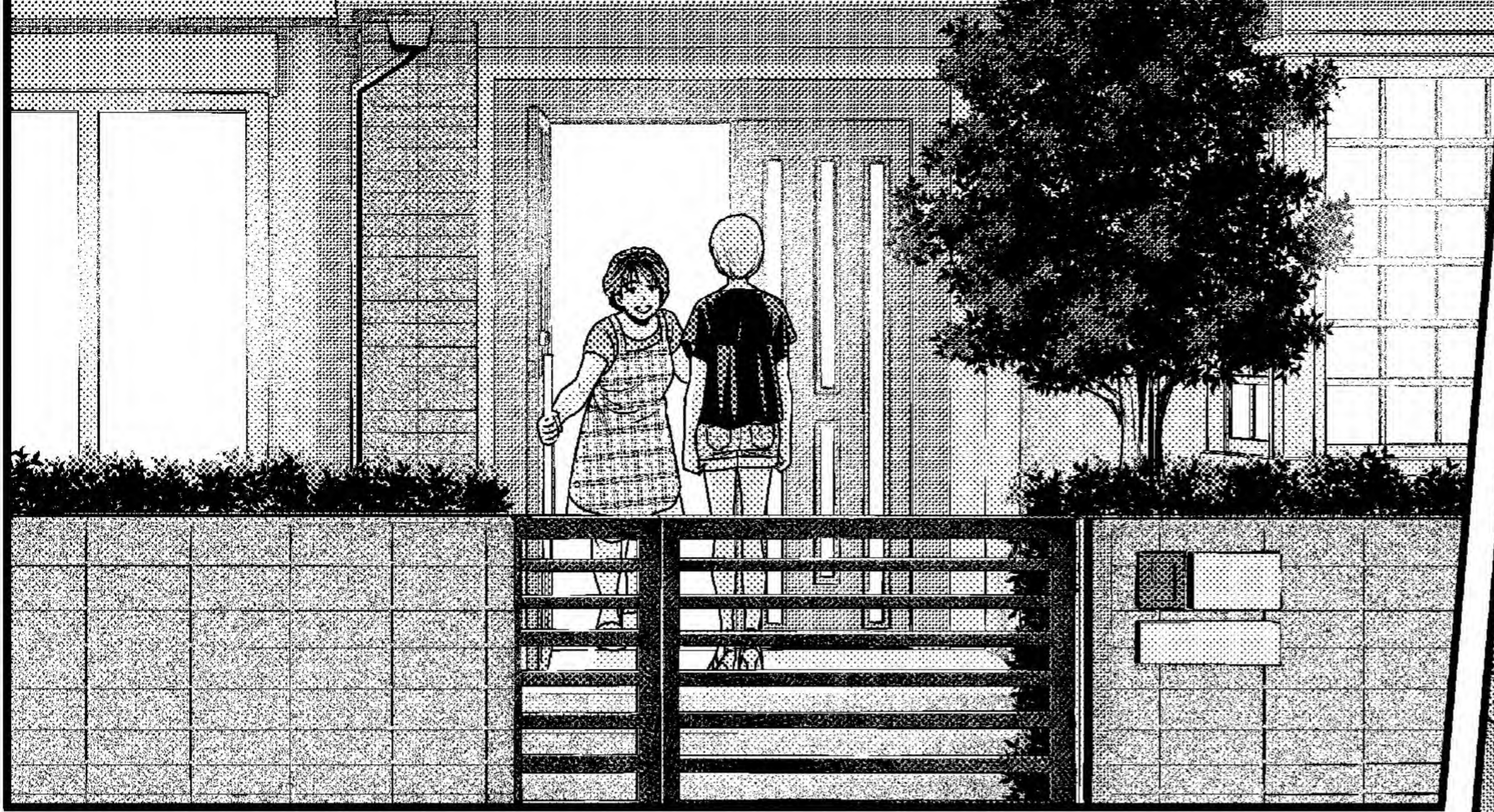
Y'THINK  
WE'D BE  
ABLE TO  
OPENLY GO  
ON DATES  
IF THAT  
WERE THE  
CASE?



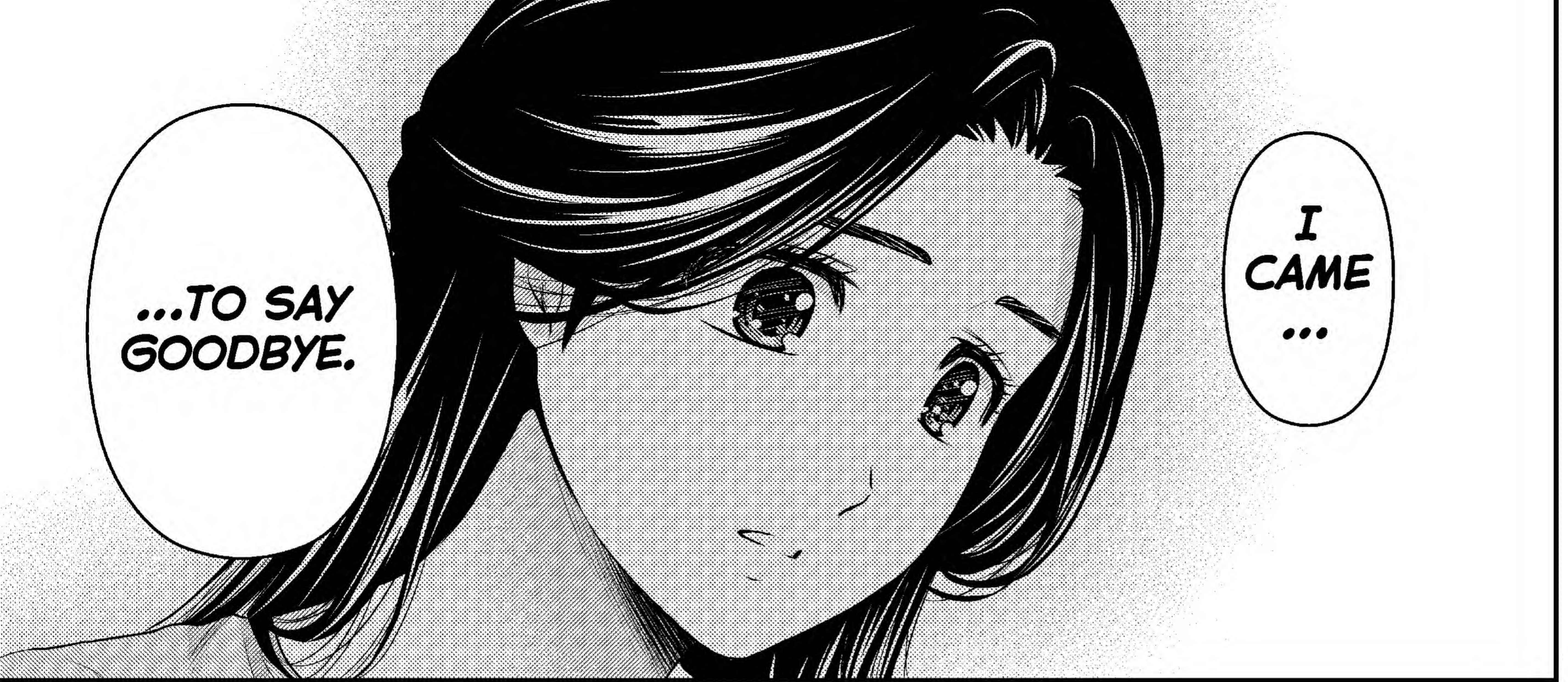
...I  
THINK  
...

...I STILL  
WOULD'VE  
FALLEN  
FOR YOU.









...TO SAY  
GOODBYE.

I  
CAME  
...



...CAN'T  
REALLY  
TAKE IT  
ANY-  
MORE.

I  
JUST  
...

...AND  
ACTING  
LIKE  
NOTHING  
HAP-  
PENED,  
BUT...

HONESTLY,  
I CON-  
SIDERED  
BRUSHING  
IT OFF...

HUH  
?



...ALWAYS  
LOVED YOU,  
MIYABI.

I'VE  
...





I TOOK  
ADVANTAGE  
OF YOUR  
TRUST.

IT WAS  
JUST AN  
EXCUSE.

SO, WHEN  
I SAID  
THAT KISS  
WAS JUST  
PRACTICE,



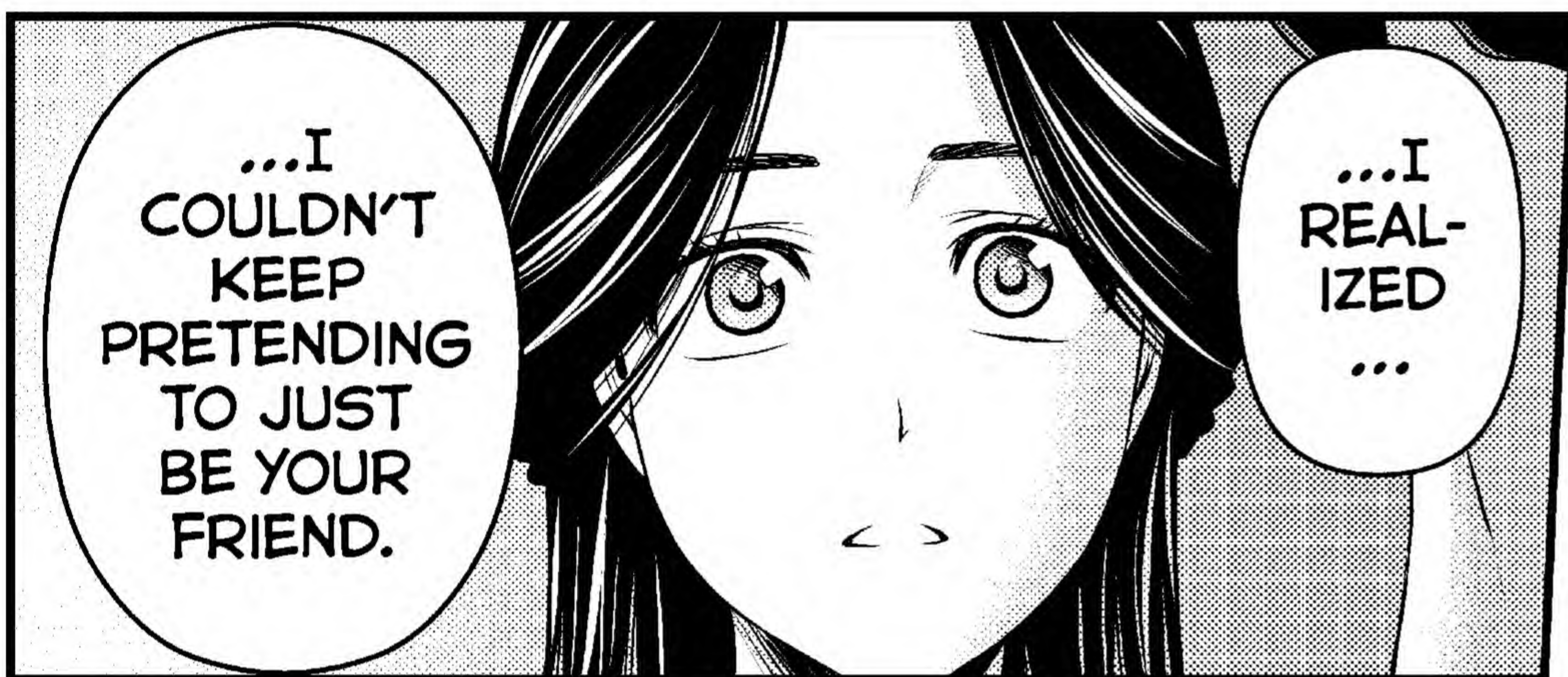
AND OF  
COURSE,  
I MEAN  
AS MORE  
THAN  
JUST A  
FRIEND.



WHEN I  
SAW YOU  
CRY...

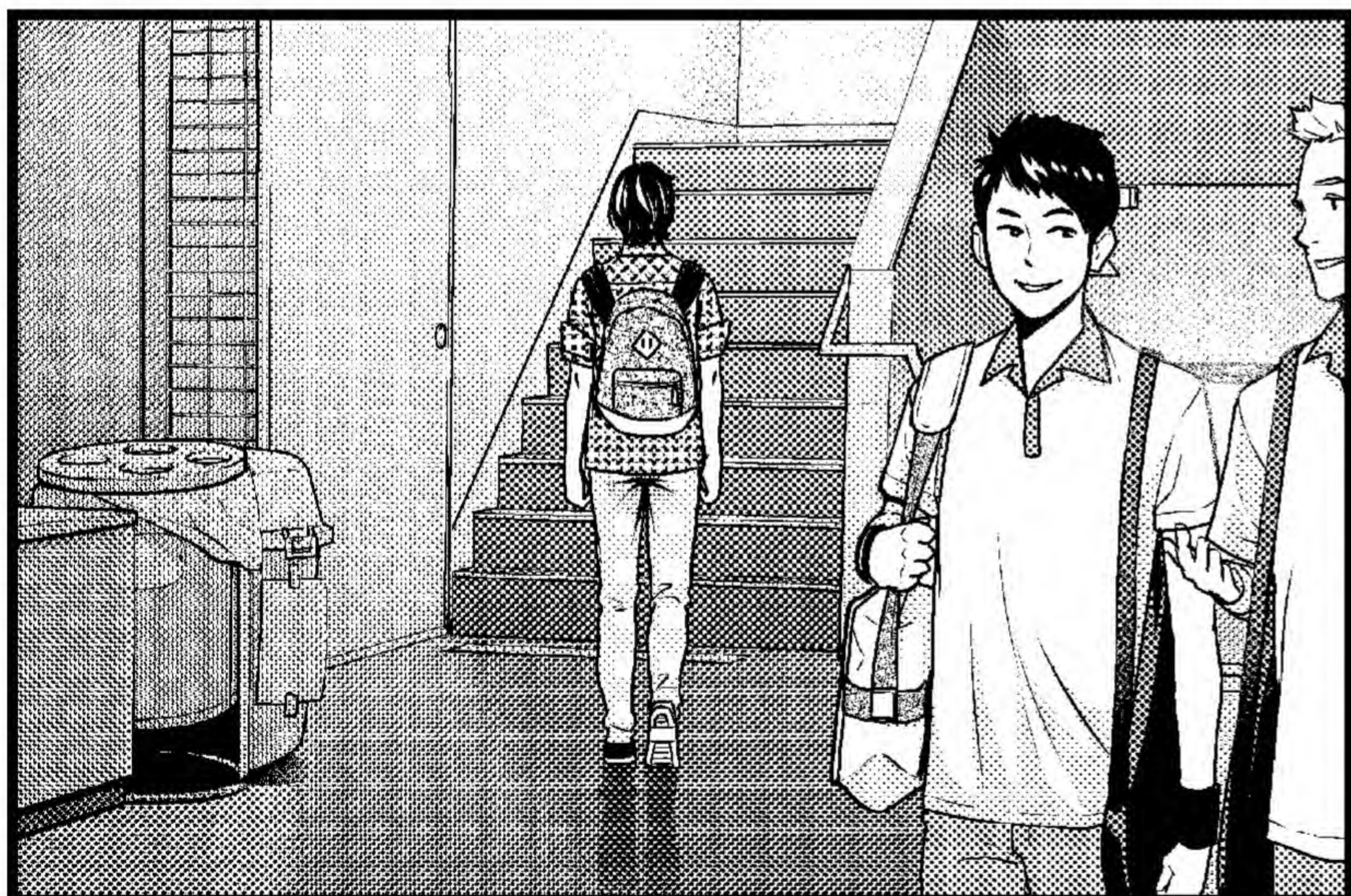
I'M  
REALLY  
SORRY.

I DIDN'T  
THINK IT'D  
TURN OUT  
THAT WAY.



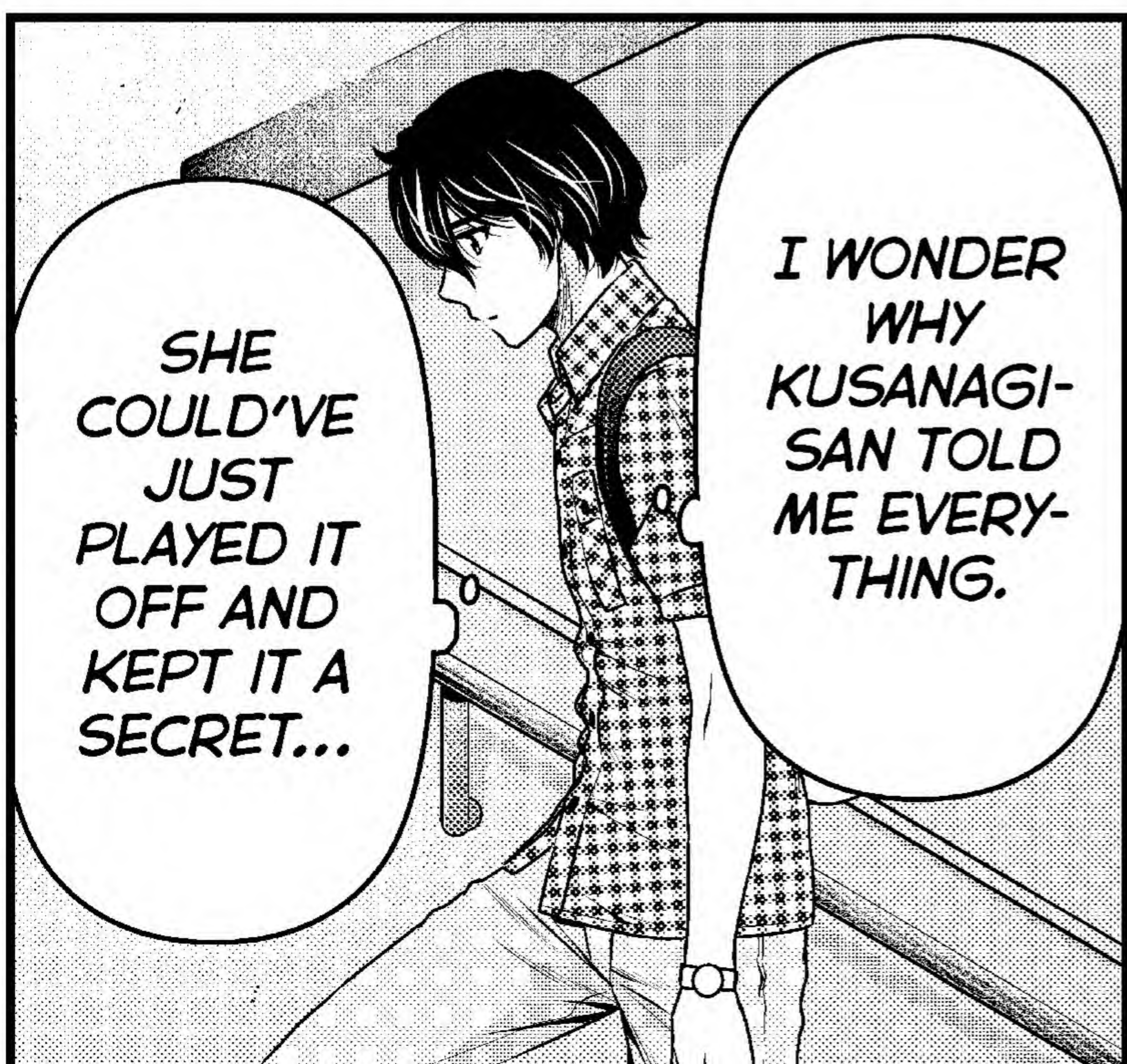
...I  
COULDN'T  
KEEP  
PRETENDING  
TO JUST  
BE YOUR  
FRIEND.

...I  
REAL-  
IZED  
...



THANKS  
FOR  
EVERY-  
THING  
UNTIL  
NOW,

MIYABI.



SHE  
COULD'VE  
JUST  
PLAYED IT  
OFF AND  
KEPT IT A  
SECRET...

I WONDER  
WHY  
KUSANAGI-  
SAN TOLD  
ME EVERY-  
THING.









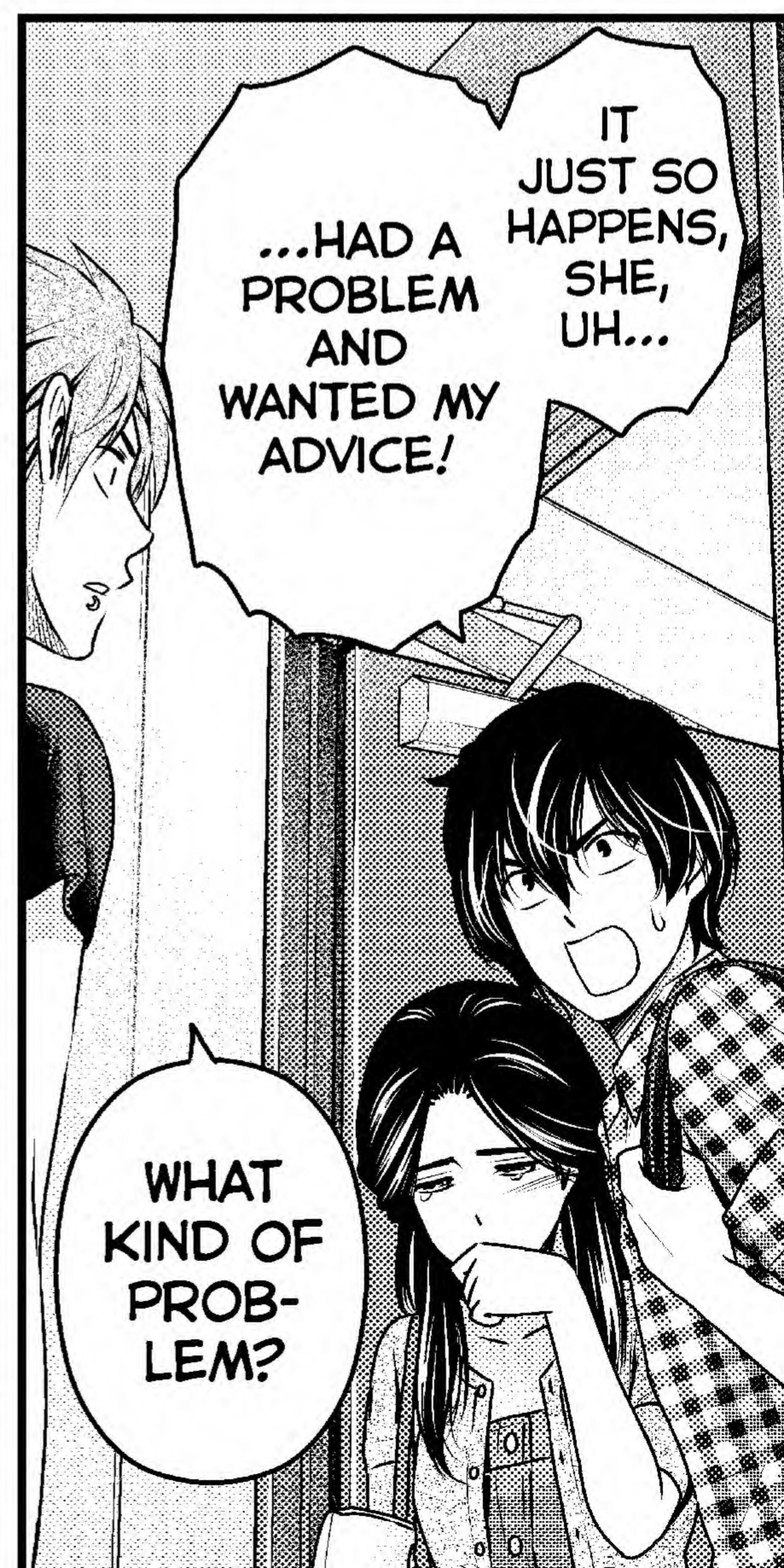




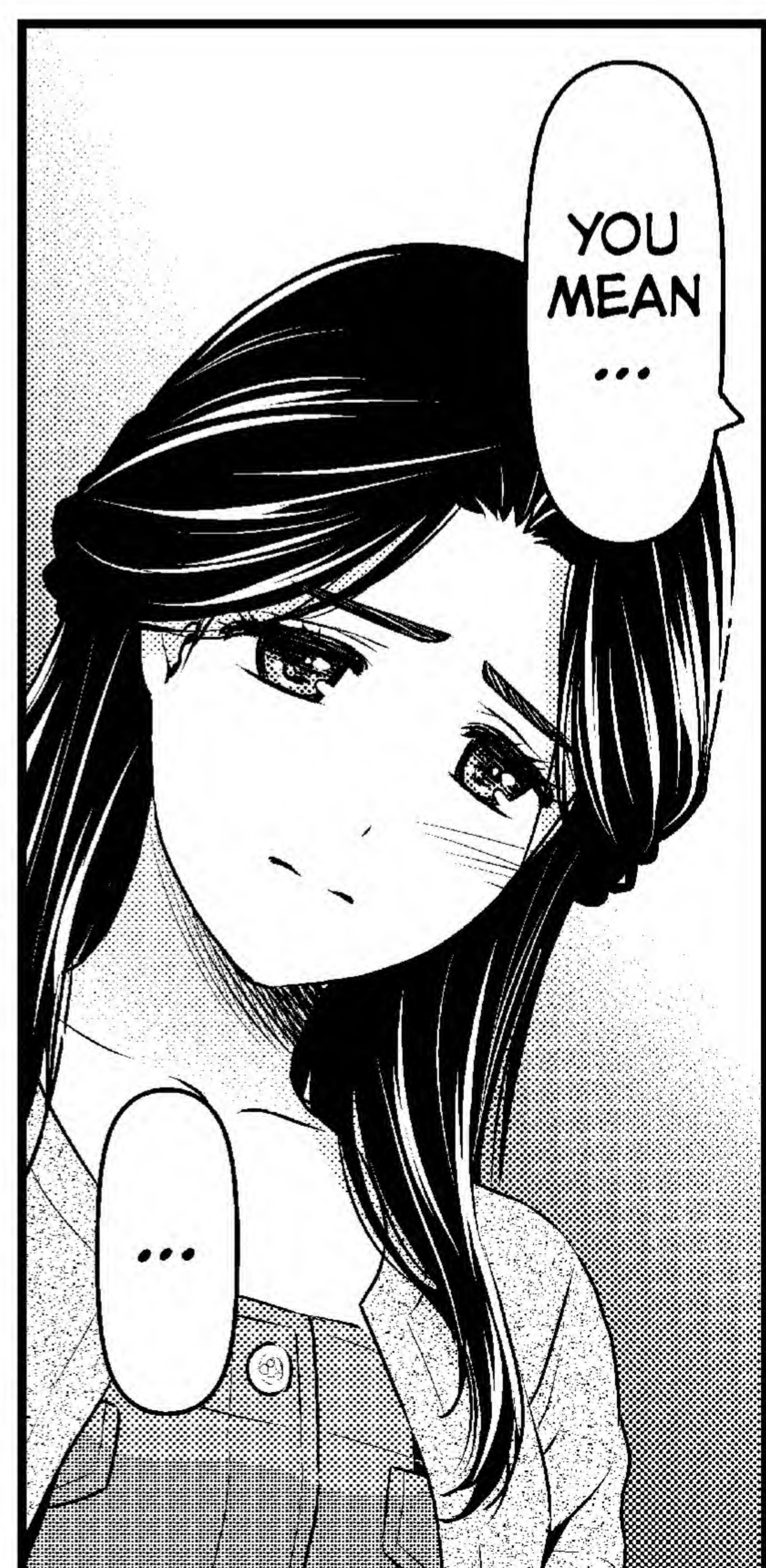
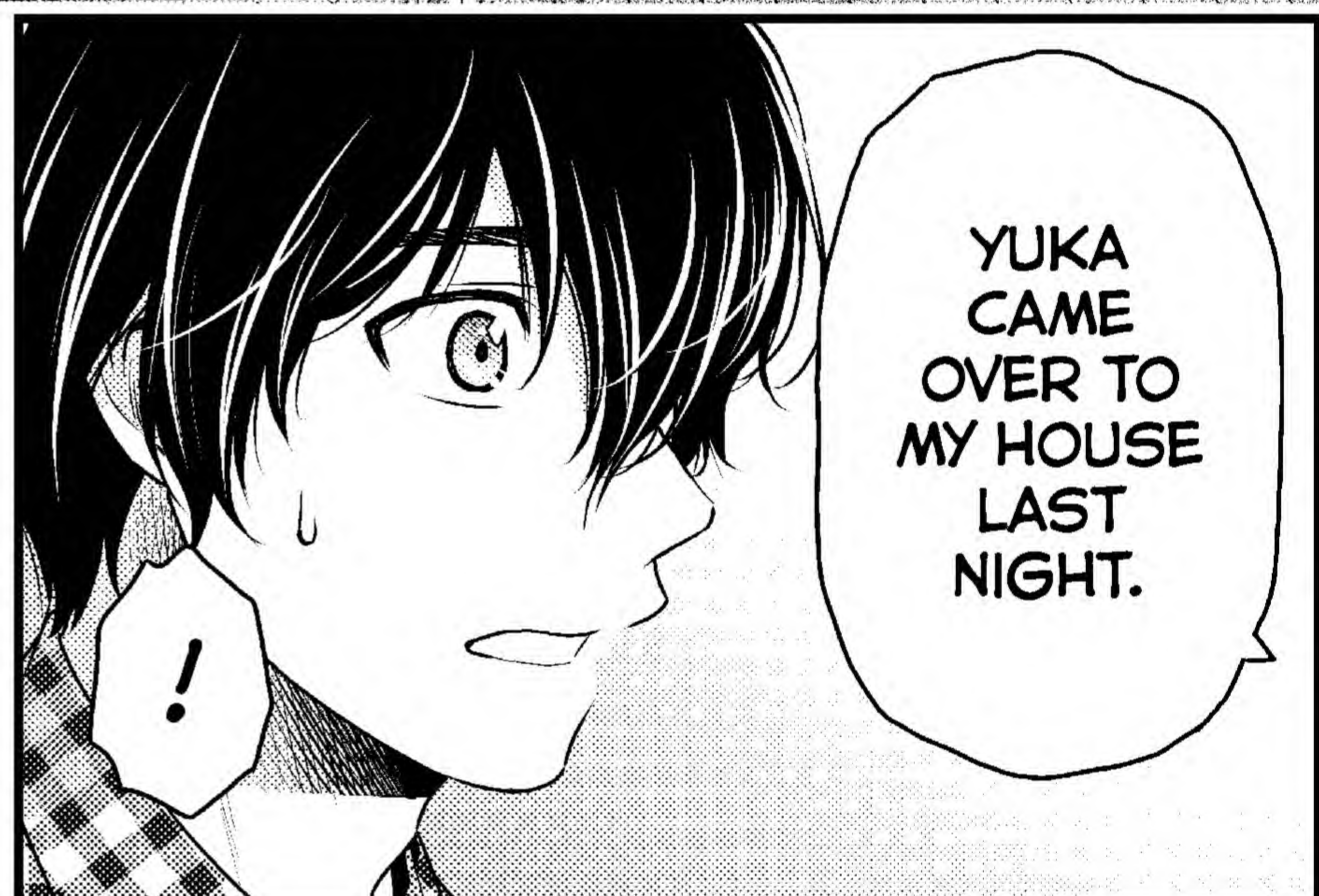
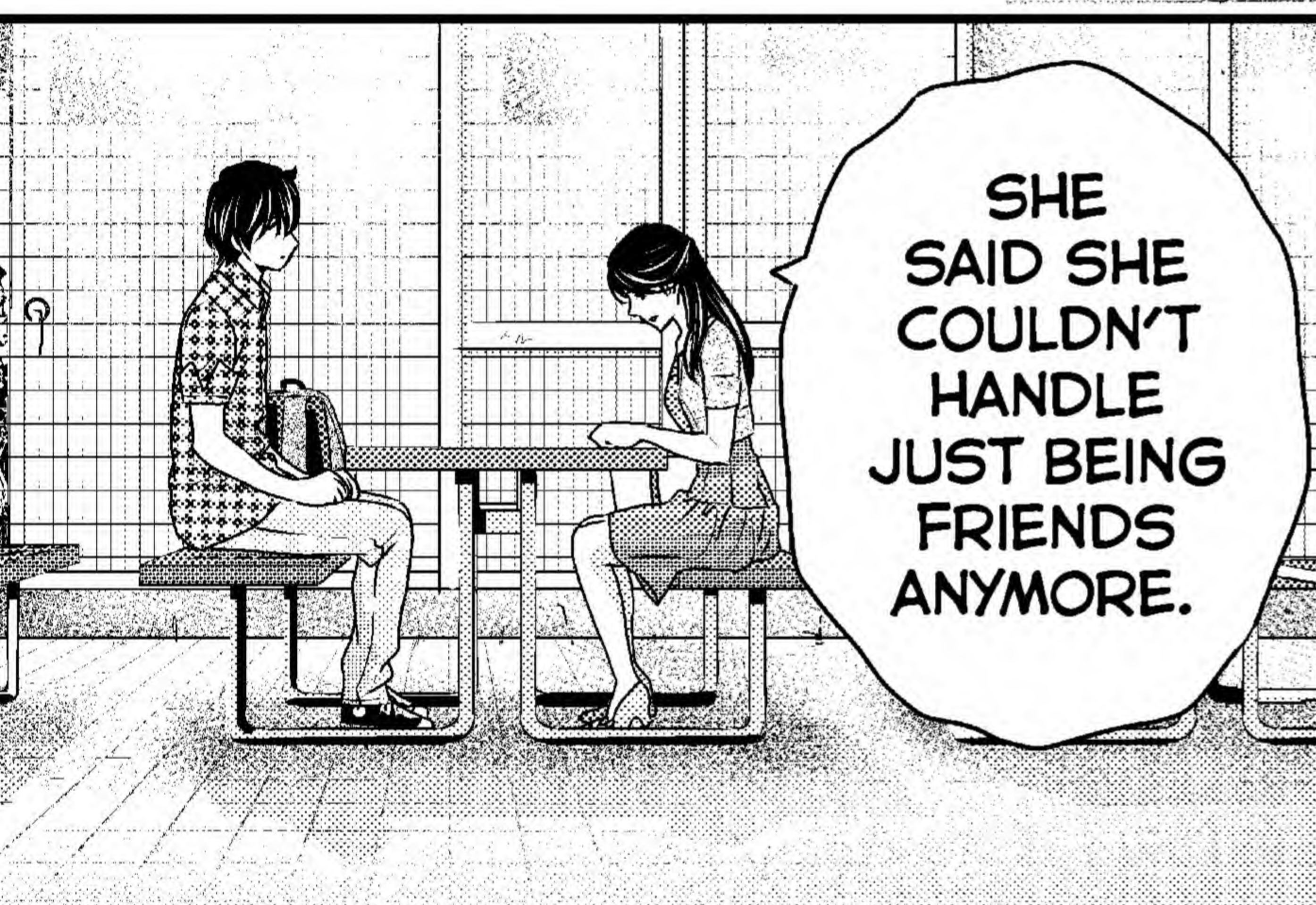
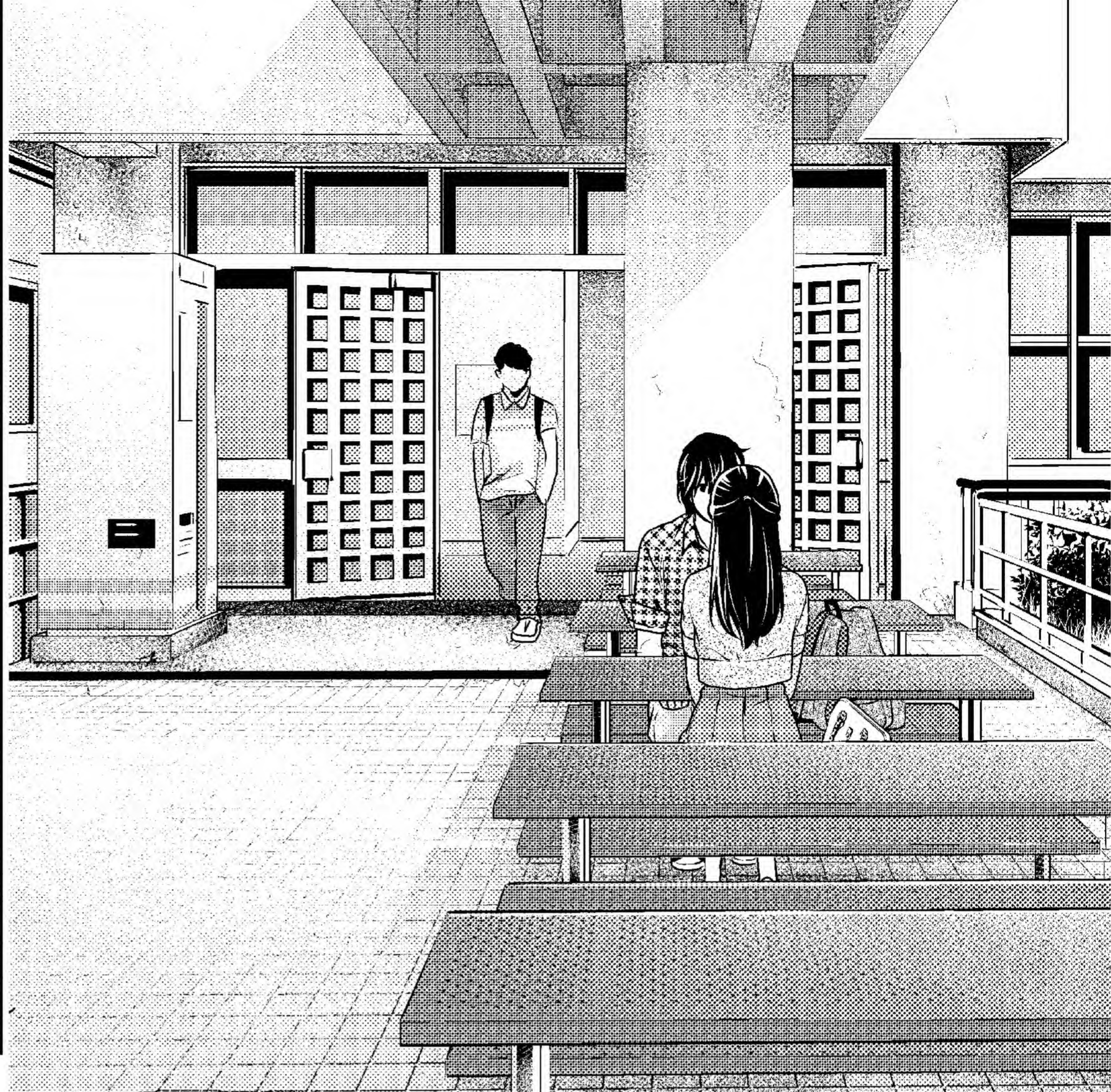
## CHAPTER 166: THE OUTCOME OF FRIENDSHIP















...WE  
WERE  
BEST  
FRIENDS.

I JUST  
THOUGHT  
...

ALL  
THIS  
TIME,



I JUST  
DON'T  
KNOW...

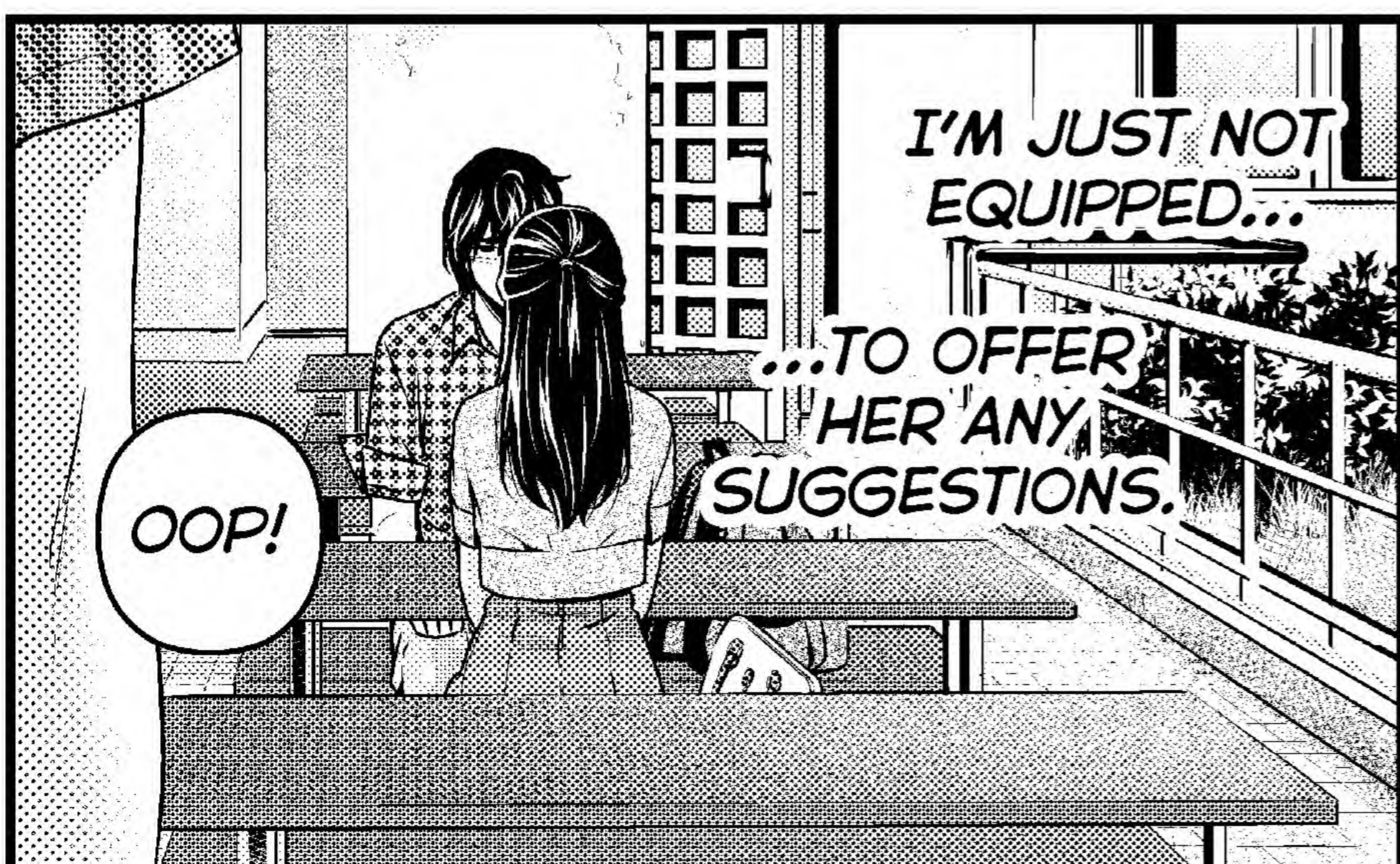
...WHAT I  
SHOULD  
DO.



THE ONLY  
PERSON I  
KNOW WITH  
ANY SIMILAR  
EXPERIENCE IS  
KOBAYASHI-  
SAN.

WHAT DO I  
EVEN SAY  
TO HER?

AND WHILE  
HE'S ALWAYS  
BEEN OPEN  
ABOUT IT, HE'S  
NEVER GONE  
INTO TOO  
MUCH DETAIL.



OOP!

I'M JUST NOT  
EQUIPPED...

...TO OFFER  
HER ANY  
SUGGESTIONS.



I MEAN,  
SHE'S  
EVEN HAD A  
BOYFRIEND  
BEFORE.

I NEVER  
IMAGINED  
YUKA SAW  
ME AS ANY-  
THING MORE  
THAN THAT.

BUT THEN  
OUT OF  
NOWHERE,  
SHE SAYS  
SHE'S  
ALWAYS  
LOVED ME  
...

...AND  
THAT SHE'S  
LEAVING  
BECAUSE  
SHE CAN'T  
BEAR TO BE  
NEAR ME  
ANYMORE.





NO, NOT EXACTLY...

DID YOU MAKE HER CRY, FUJII?



DO YOU MIND?

OH, RIGHT. I WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING, SERIZAWA.



WHY THE LONG FACES, YOU TWO?

IS SERIZAWA CRYING?



...I FIGURED THAT WAS IT.

AAAH...!

UUH...



MIND IF I TELL THEM?

SERI-ZAWA...



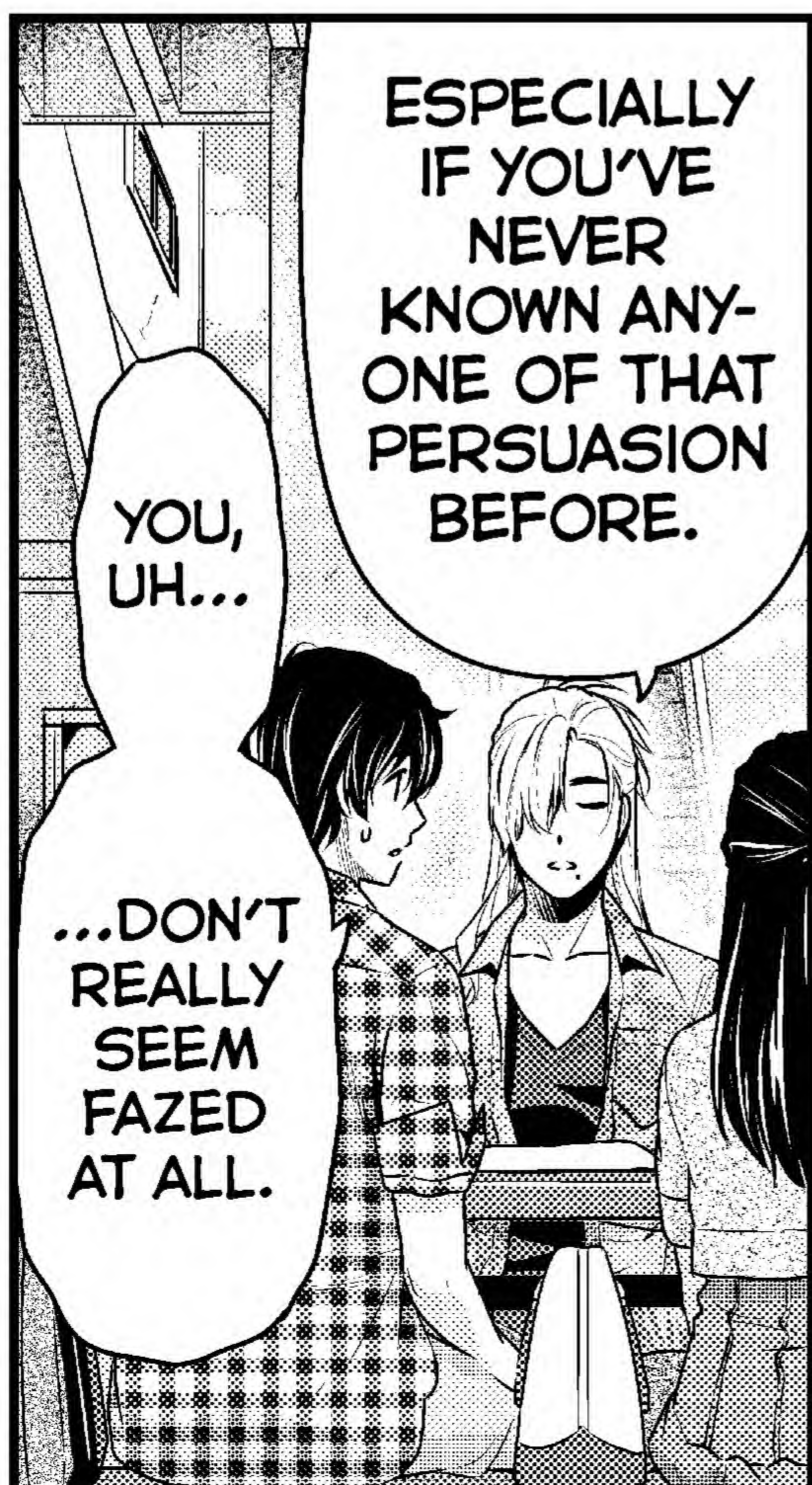
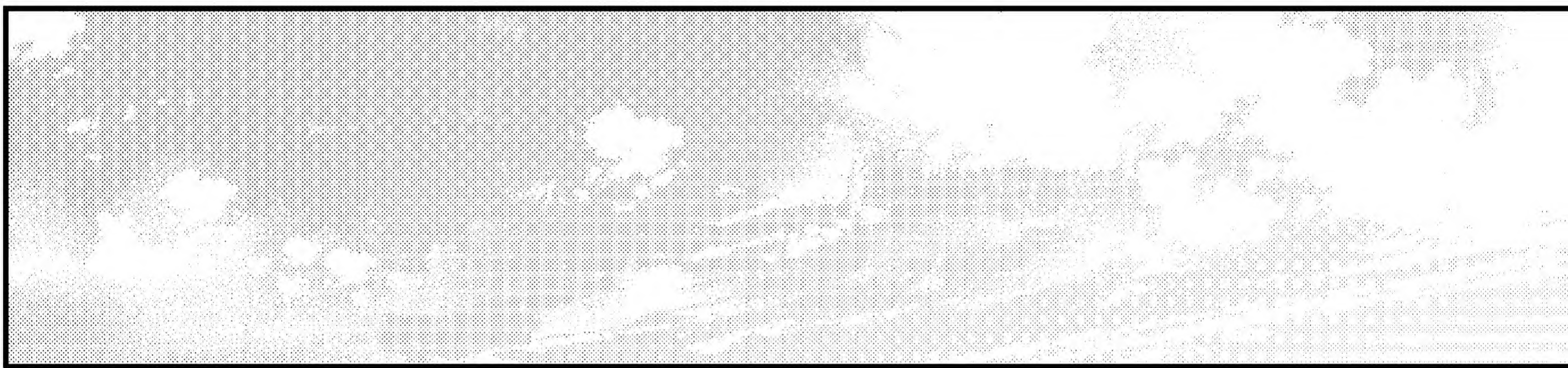
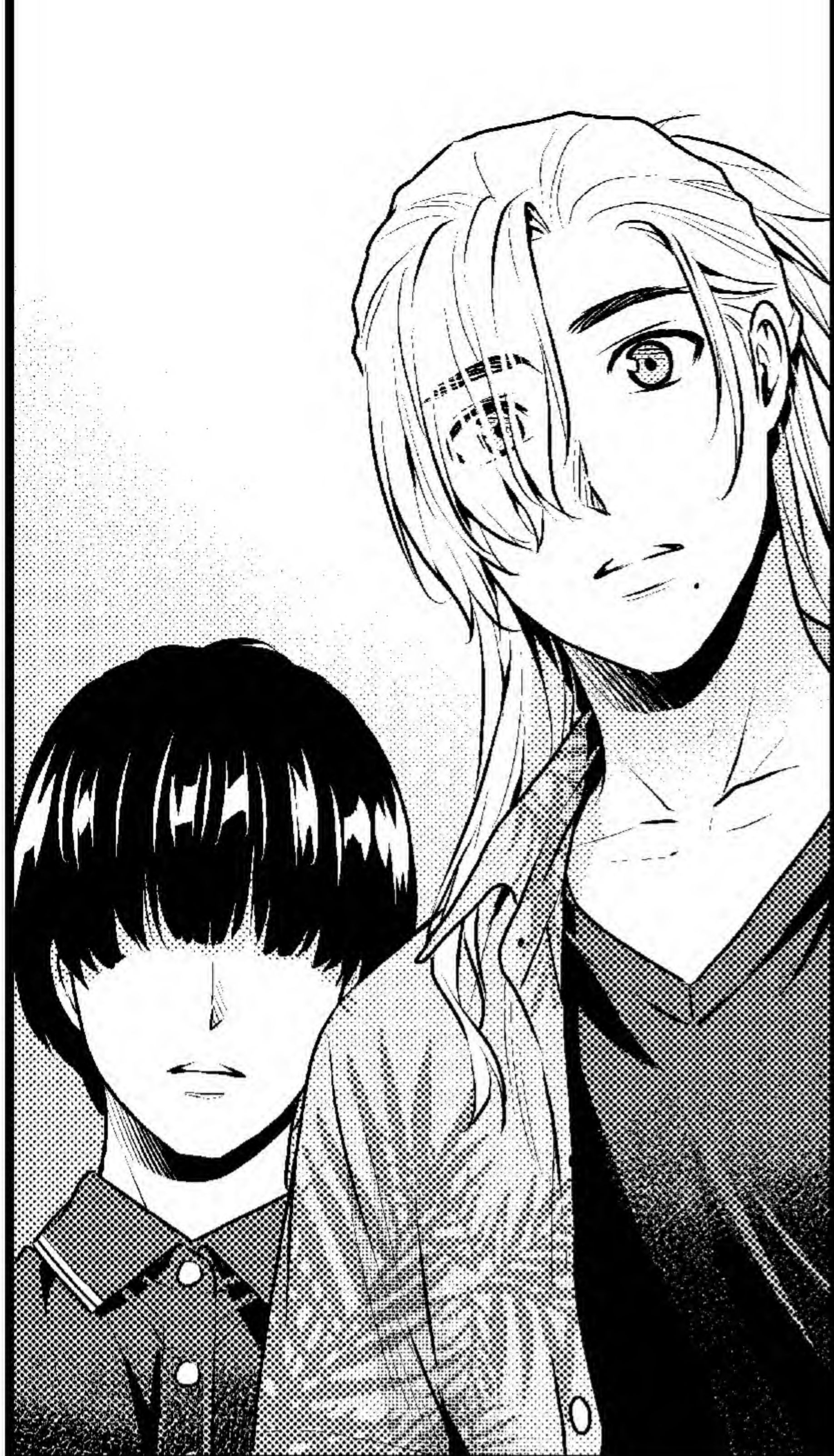
...



KUSANAGI CALLED EARLIER AND SAID SHE WANTS TO QUIT THE CLUB.

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN BETWEEN YOU TWO?









REALLY ?!

ER...

WHAT ?!

I DON'T LET GENDER GET IN THE WAY OF MY FEELINGS.

YUP.



...I'M BISEXUAL, TOO.



YOU DEPRAVED FILTHY...

OH, YEAH. I FORGOT YOU HAD THE MASOCHIST THING GOING ON, TOO.

GOOD AND BAD SADISTS COME IN BOTH FLAVORS, AFTER ALL.

YEAH, KEEP IT COMING.



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO, SERIZAWA?

AT ANY RATE,



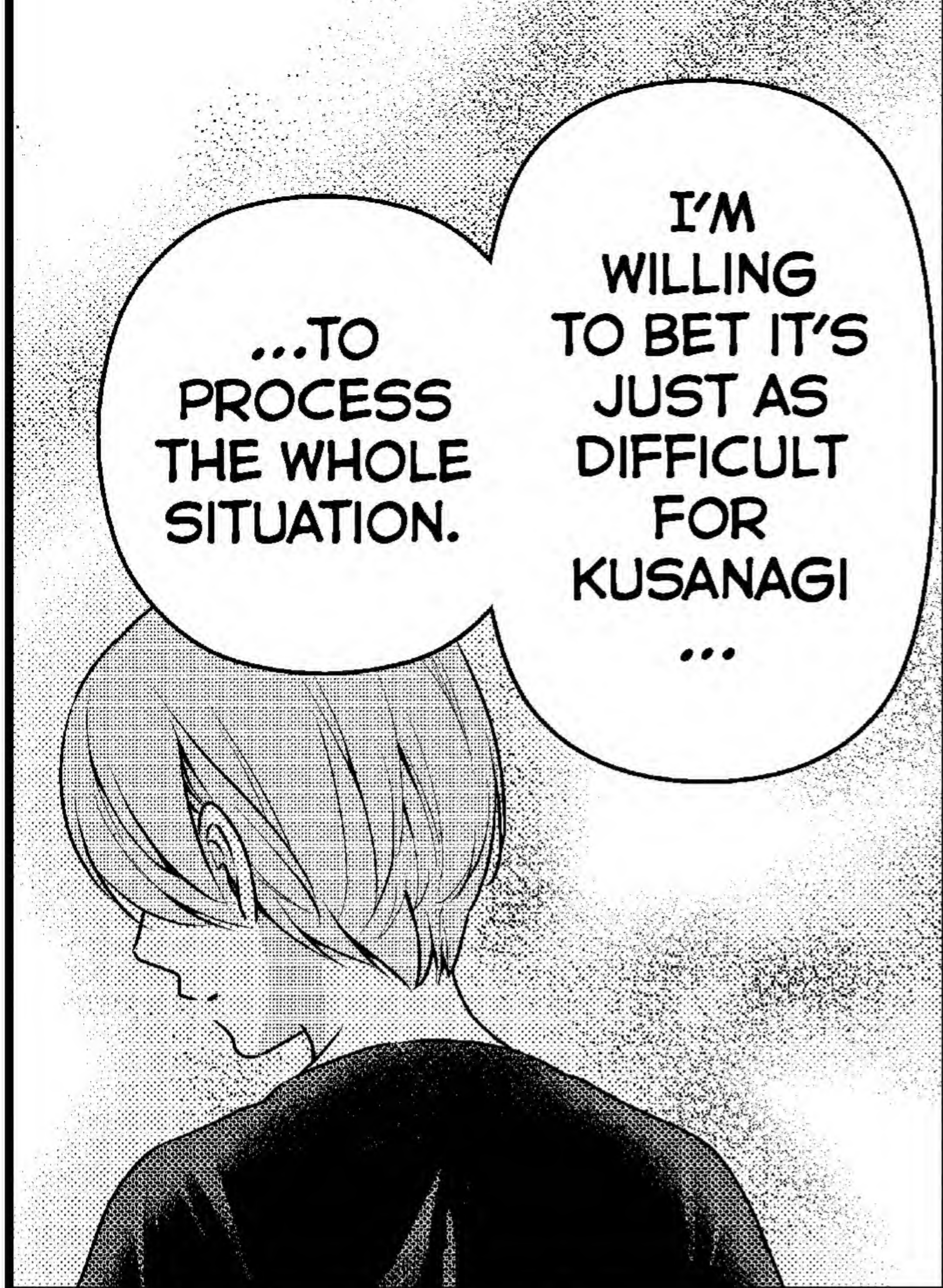
I'M NOT.

NO...



WHAT ABOUT YOU, HIYAMA-SEMPAI?

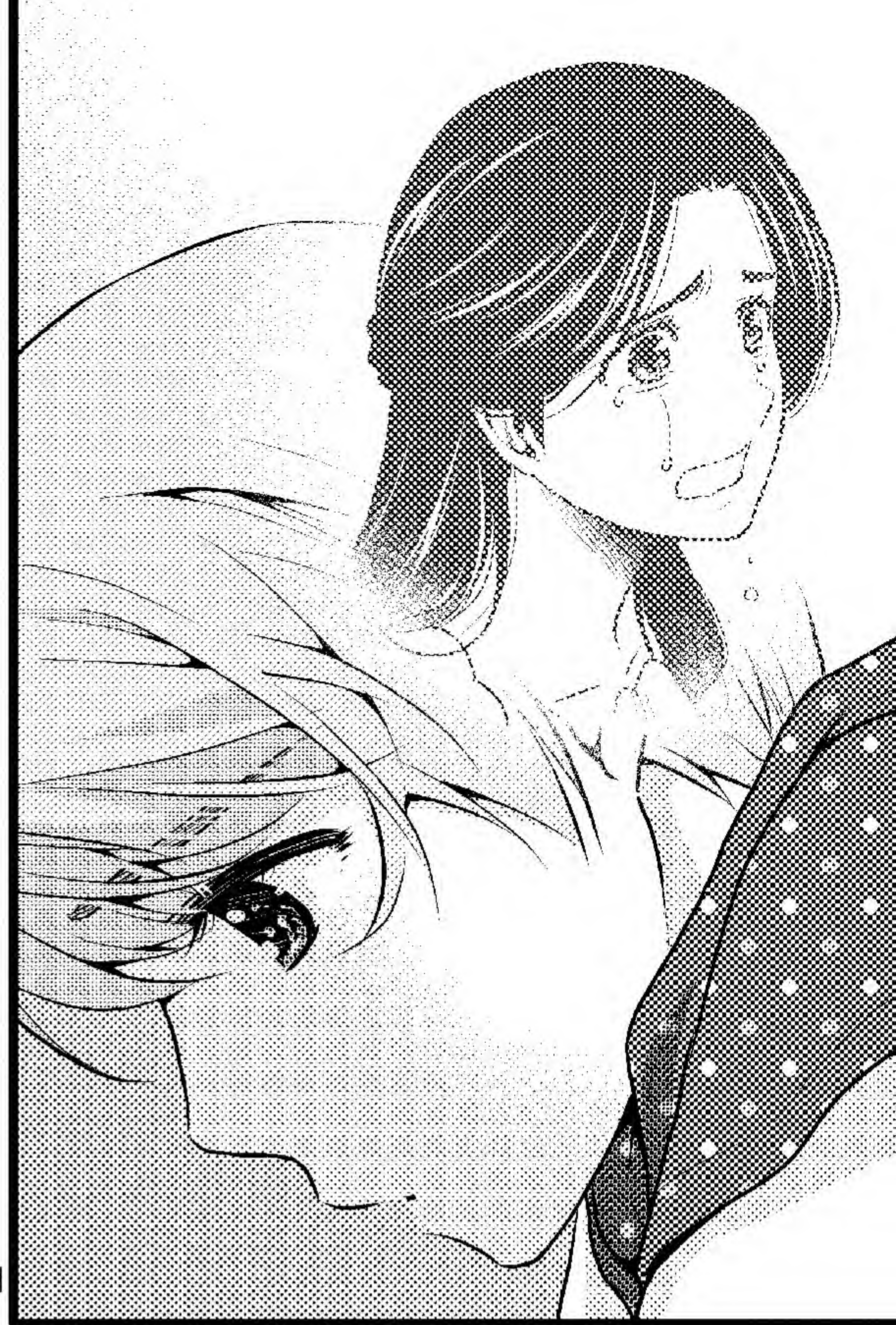






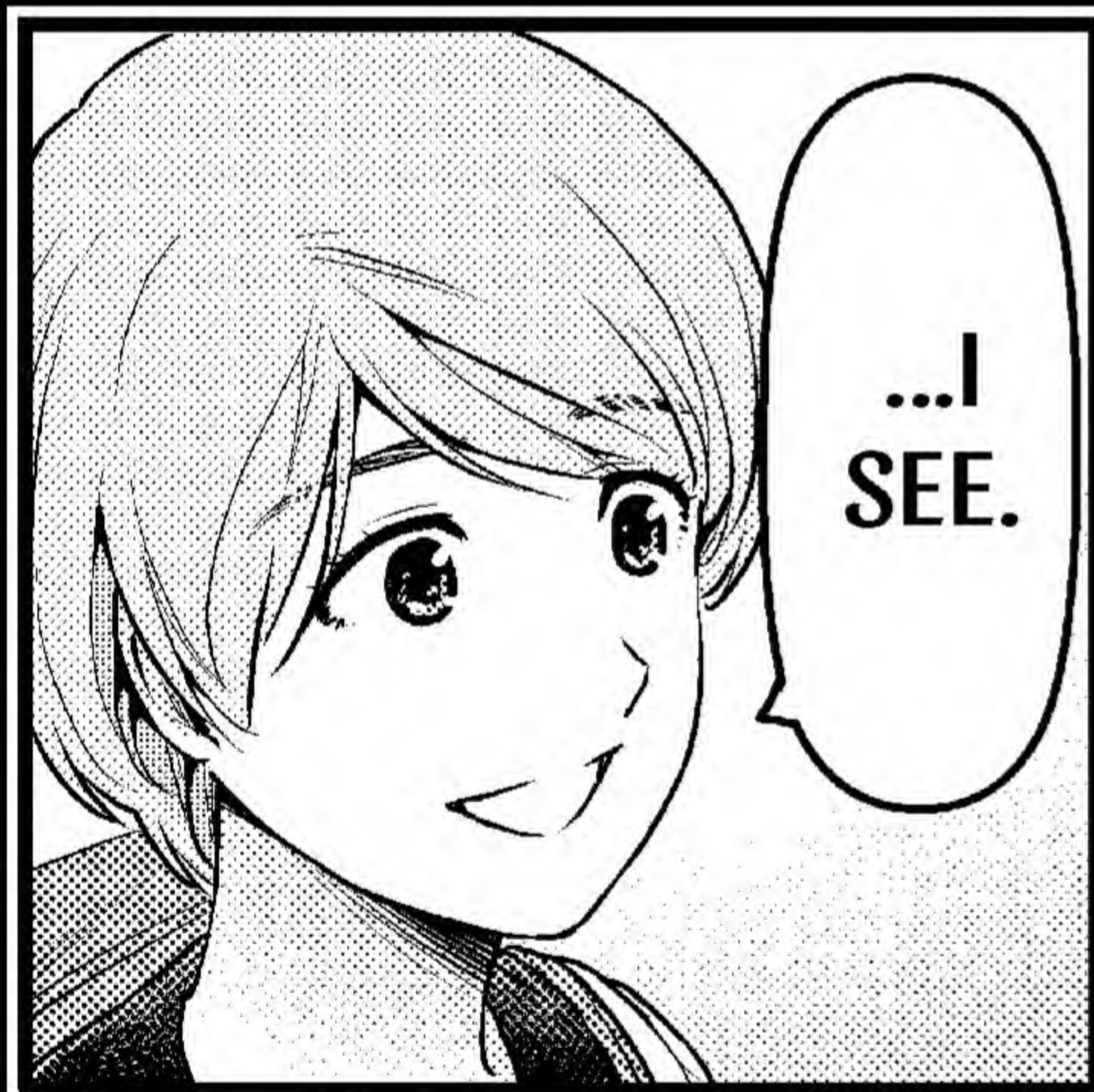






WHAT?  
TAKESHITA-  
SEMPAI FROM THE  
BASKETBALL  
TEAM ASKED  
YOU OUT?!

FIVE  
YEARS  
AGO



...I  
SEE.



W  
H  
E  
W  
!

OKAY.  
I'LL TEXT  
HIM YES.

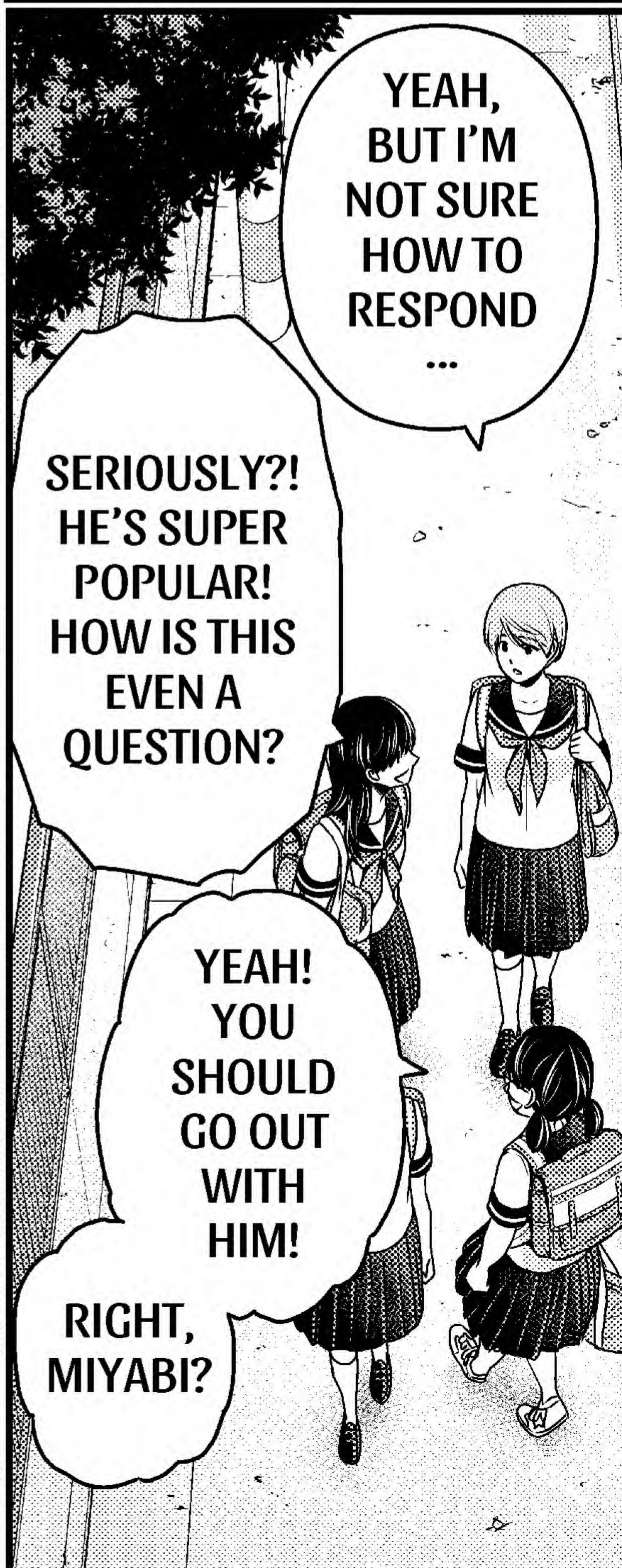
IT'S ABOUT  
TIME ONE OF  
US FINALLY  
GOT A BOY-  
FRIEND.



YOU SAID HE  
WAS NICE TO YOU  
BACK WHEN YOU  
HAD THAT JOINT  
PRACTICE  
SESSION,  
RIGHT?

SURE.

YOU  
SHOULD  
GO FOR  
IT!



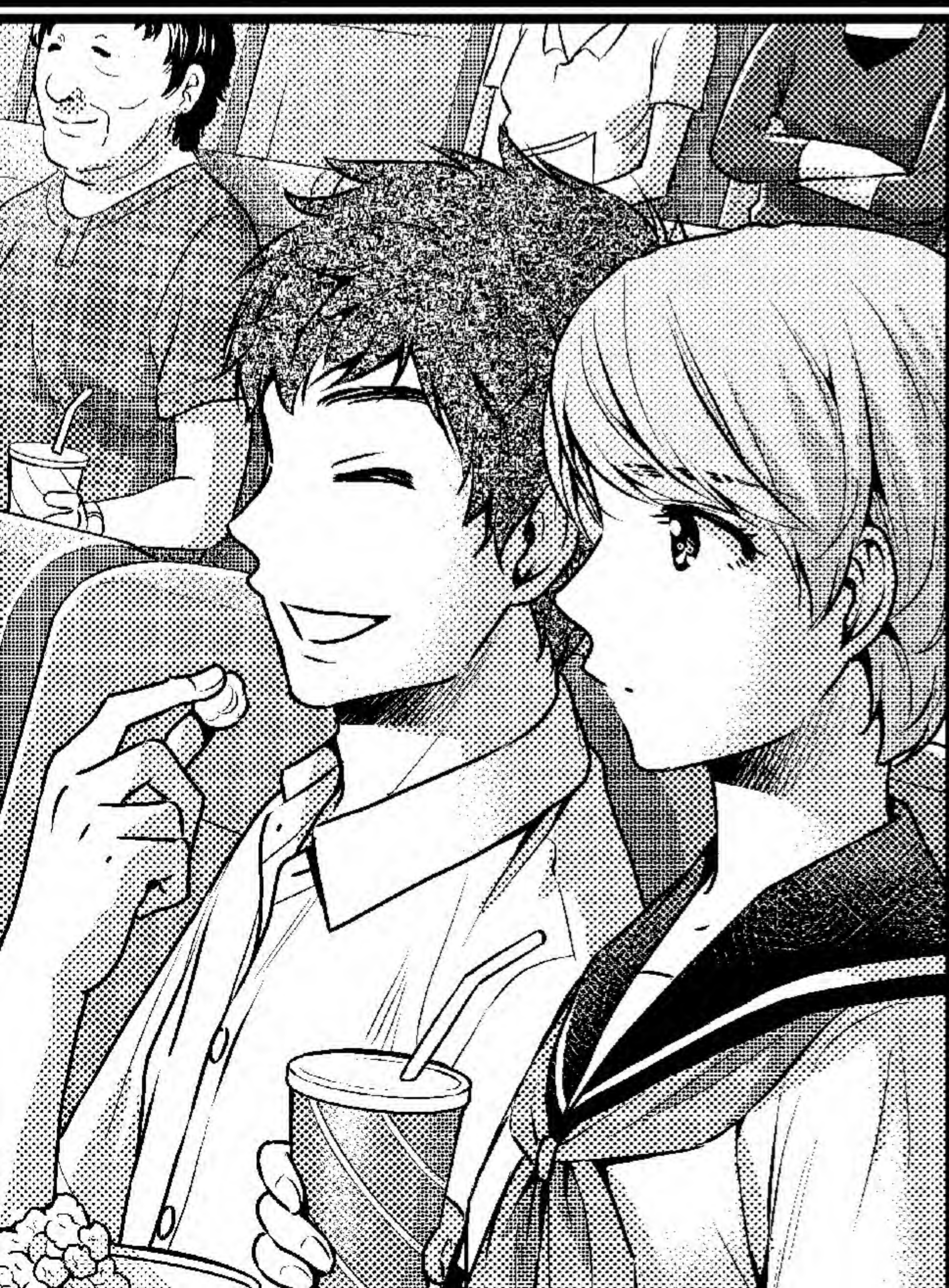
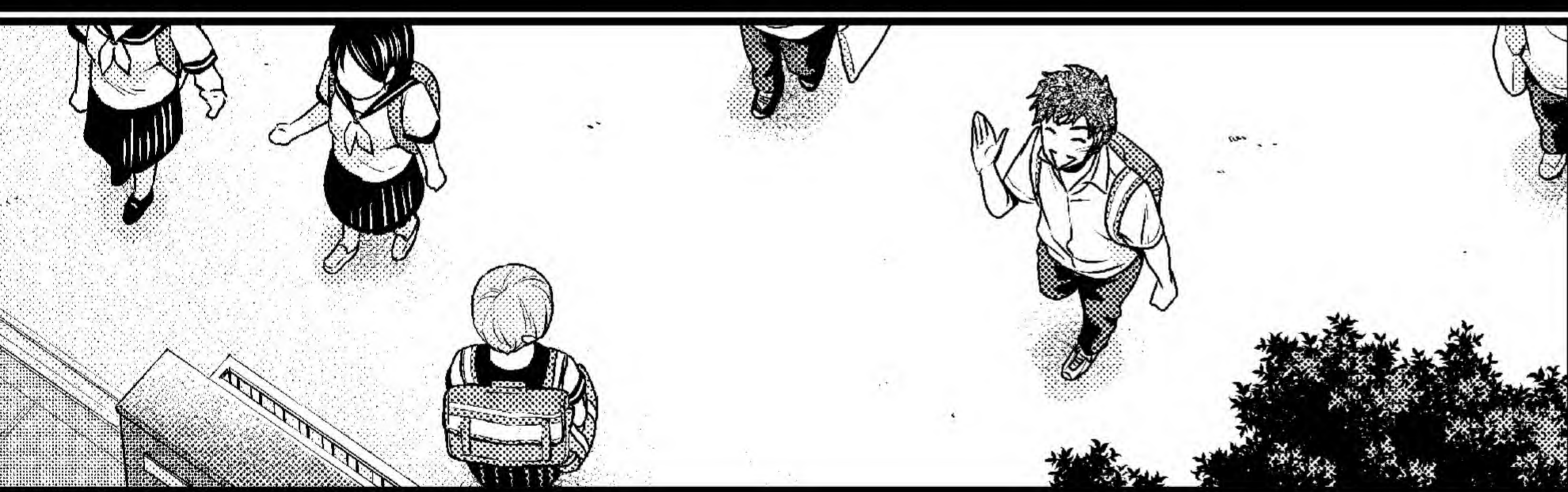
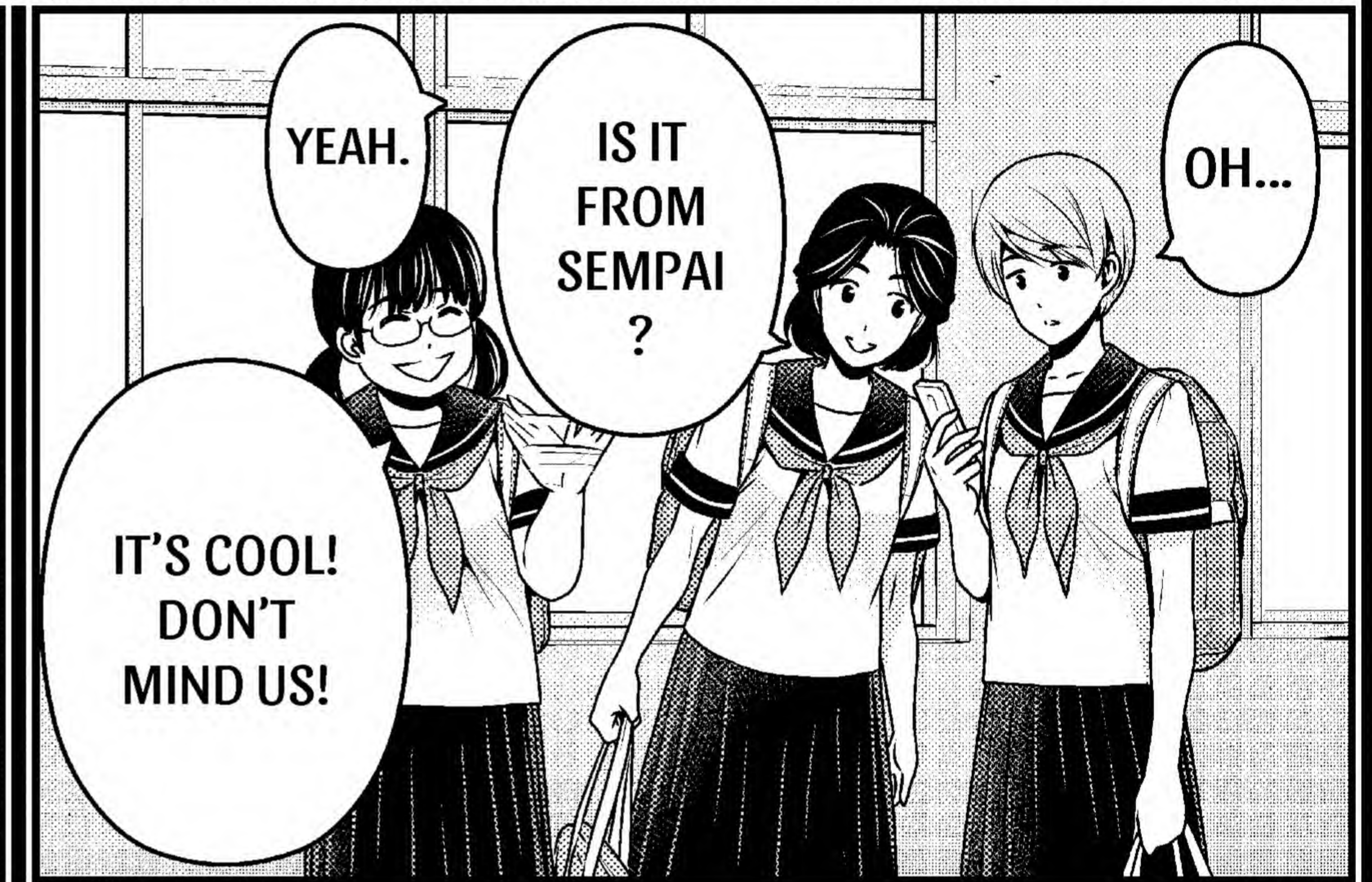
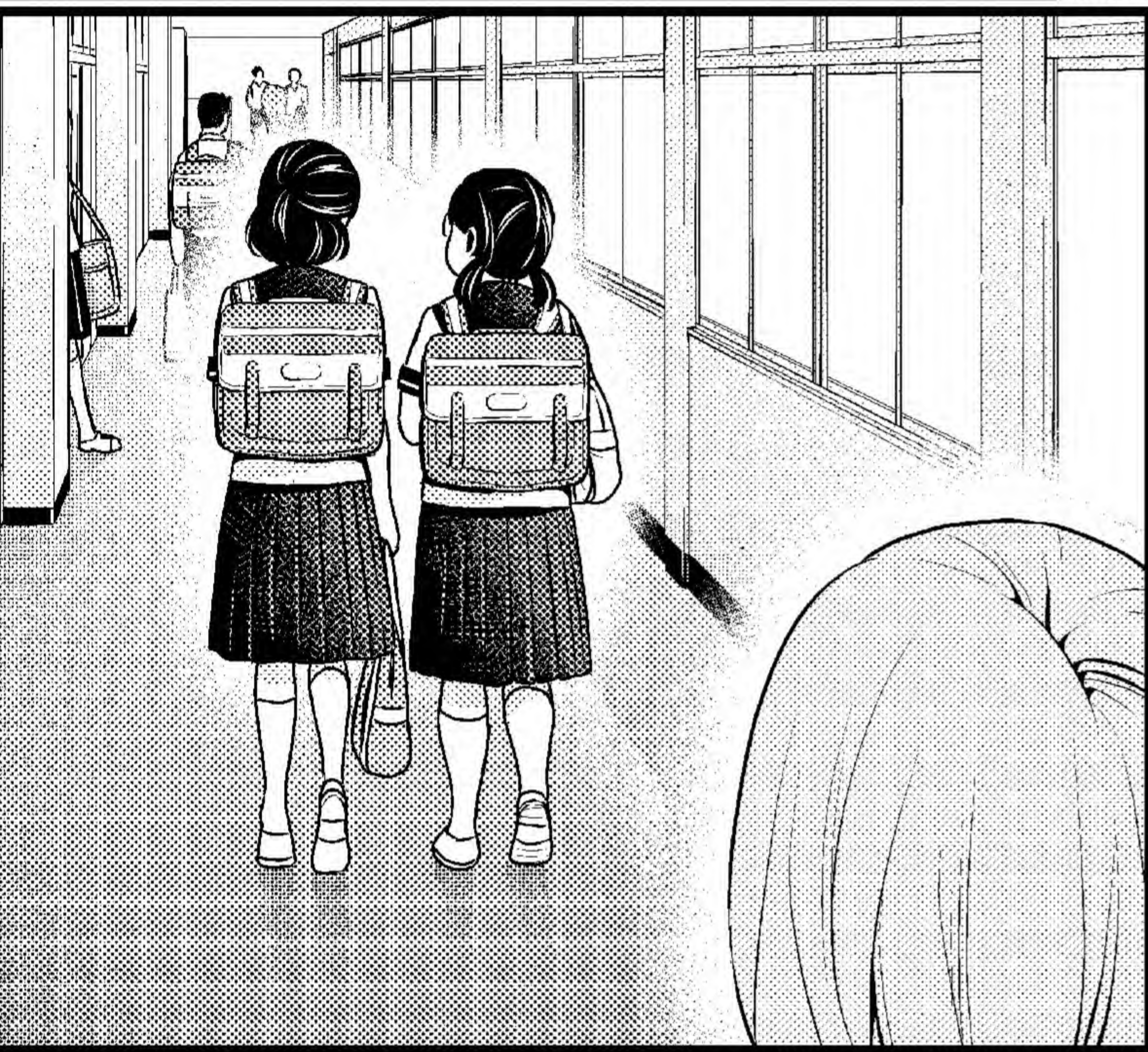
YEAH,  
BUT I'M  
NOT SURE  
HOW TO  
RESPOND  
...

SERIOUSLY?!  
HE'S SUPER  
POPULAR!  
HOW IS THIS  
EVEN A  
QUESTION?

YEAH!  
YOU  
SHOULD  
GO OUT  
WITH  
HIM!

RIGHT,  
MIYABI?







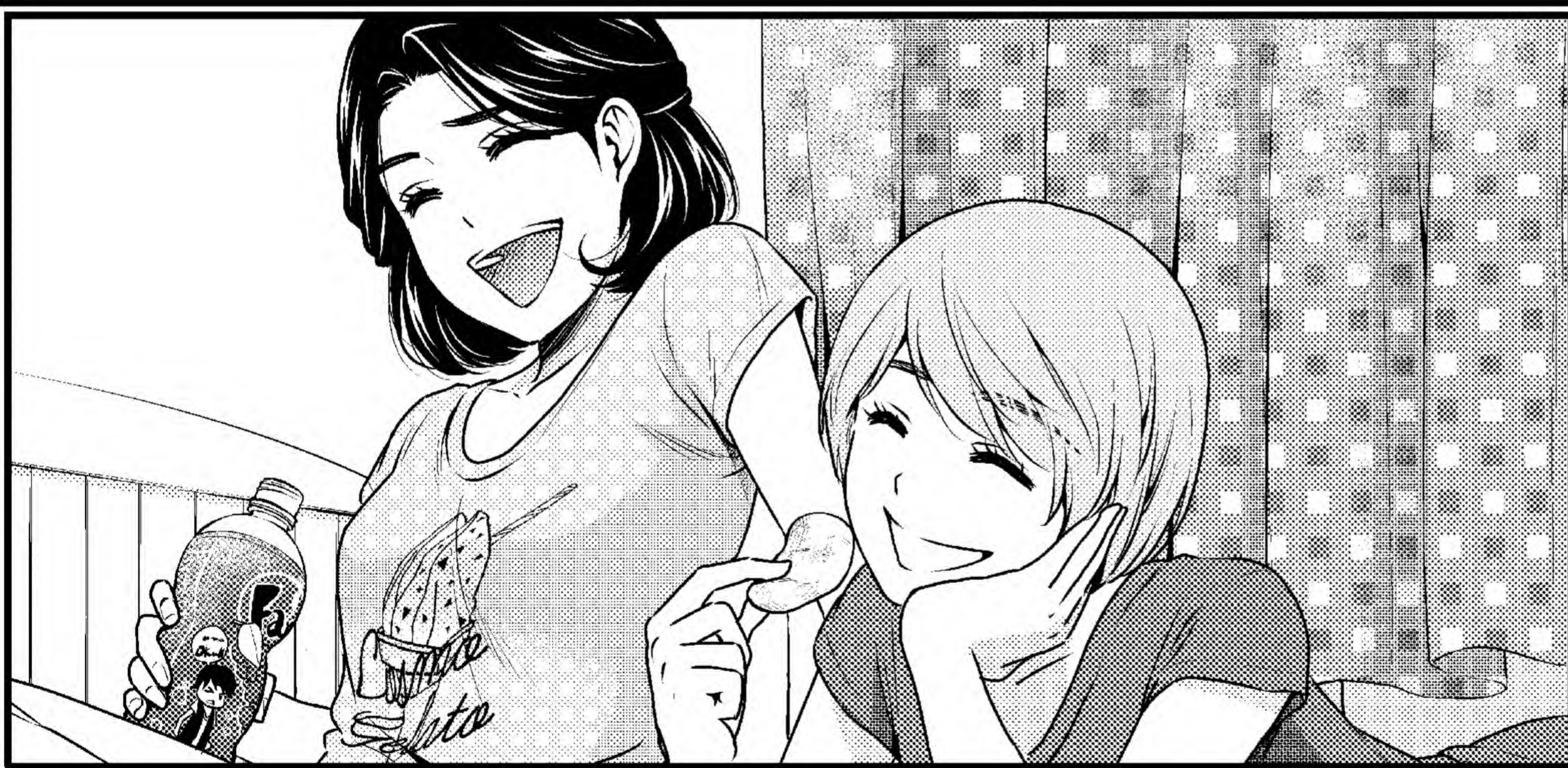
THIS...

...ISN'T  
ANY FUN  
AT ALL.



YUKA

Hey. I found that Saturn Attack movie  
you mentioned at the rental place.  
Wanna watch it together?  
I'll come over now.



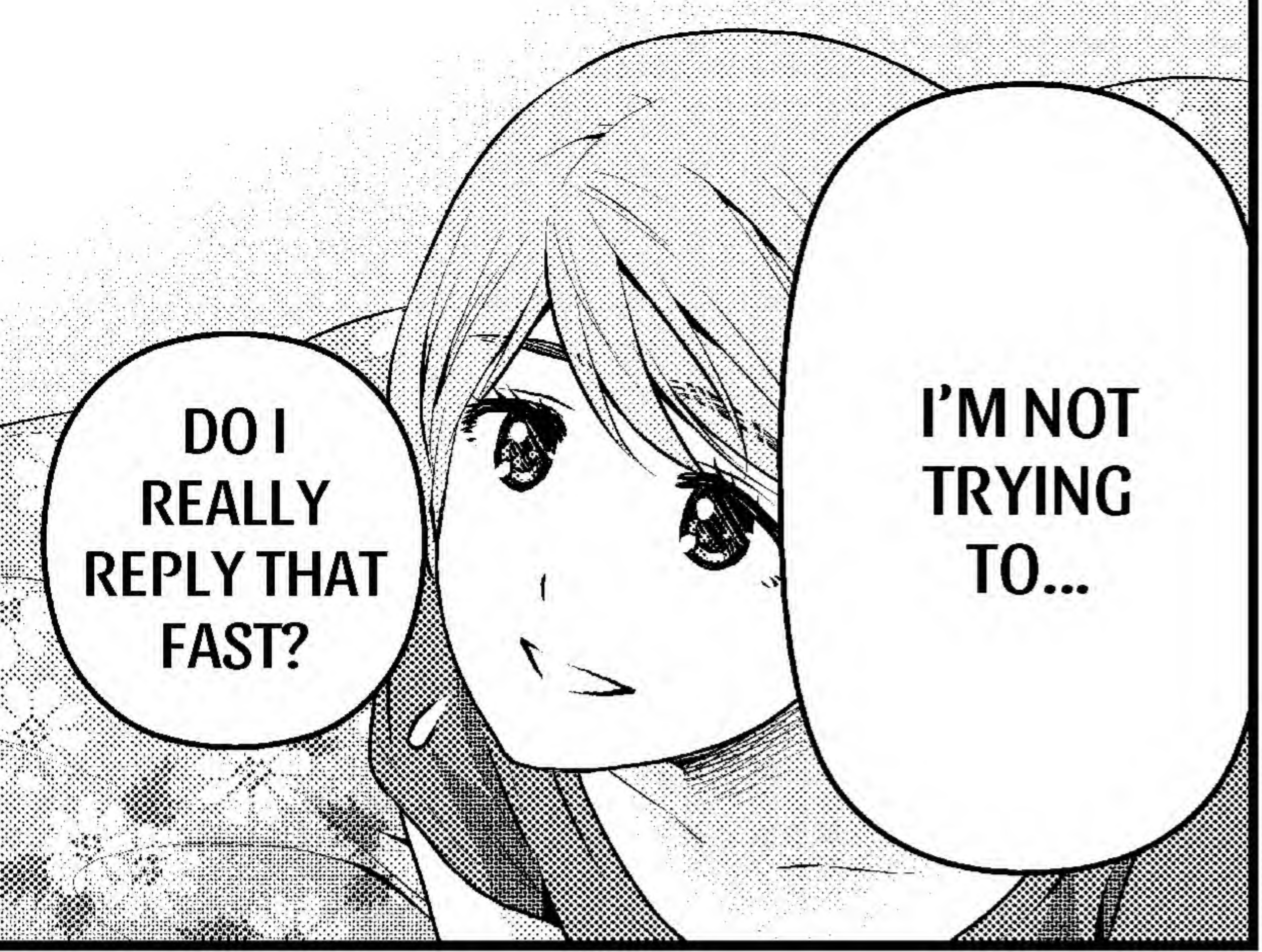
OKAY, I  
GUESS.

THOUGH THE  
OTHER DAY HE  
COMPLAINED  
THAT MY REPLIES  
ON LINE ARE  
KINDA SLOW.



HOW ARE  
THINGS  
GOING WITH  
SEMPAI?





DO I  
REALLY  
REPLY THAT  
FAST?

I'M NOT  
TRYING  
TO...



YOU  
ALWAYS  
TEXT ME  
BACK  
SUPER  
FAST.

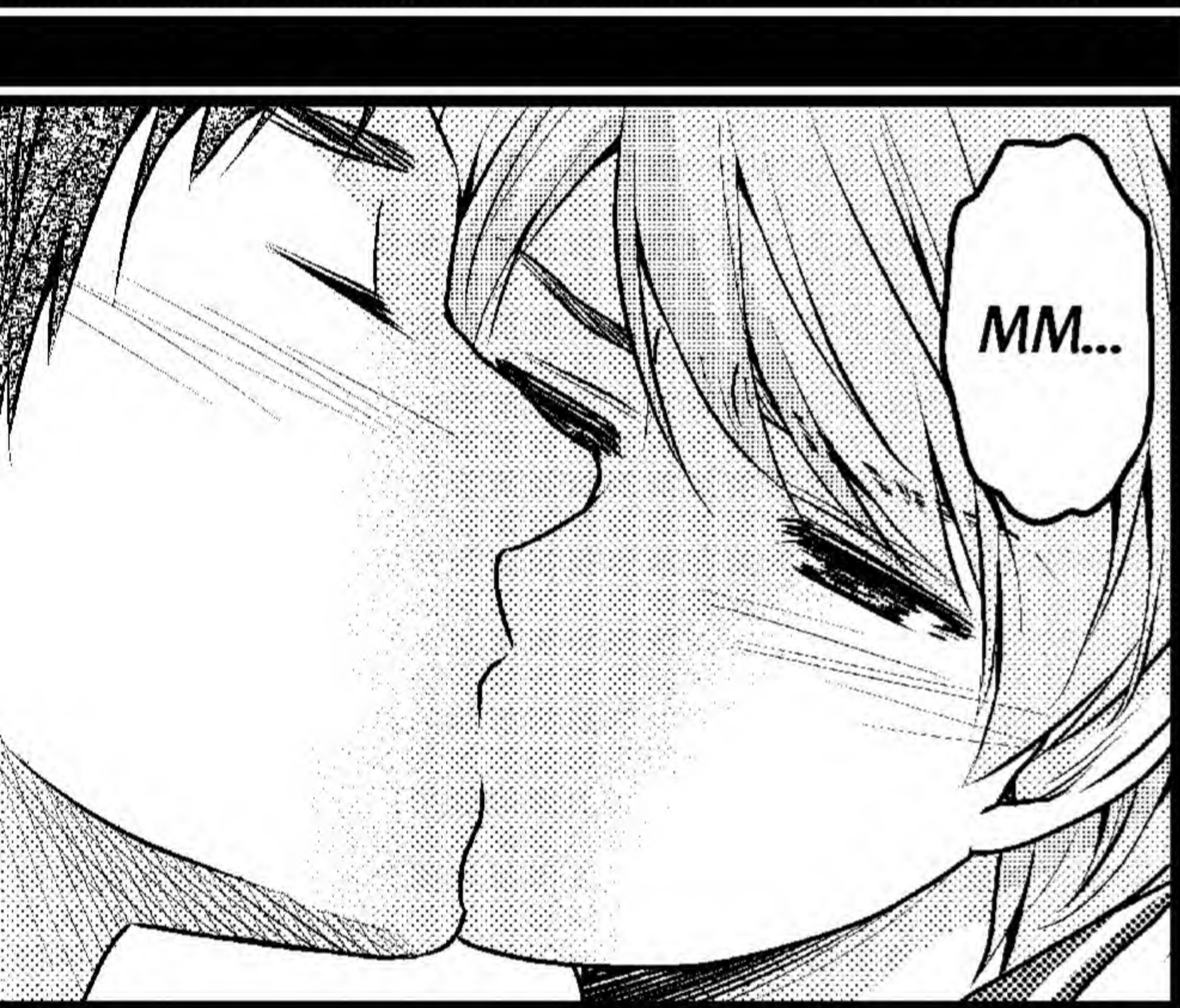
ARE YOU  
PLAYING  
HARD TO GET  
OR SOME-  
THING?



あははは  
AH HA HA

DON'T  
LET  
SEMPAI  
HEAR  
YOU SAY  
THAT.

WEIRD.  
MAYBE  
IT'S JUST  
MORE FUN  
TALKING  
TO YOU,  
MIYABI.



MM...



AND  
HIS  
BREATH  
STINKS.

THIS  
SUCKS.

HE  
REEKS  
OF  
SWEAT.



WHY AM  
I DOING  
THIS?!







YUKA!

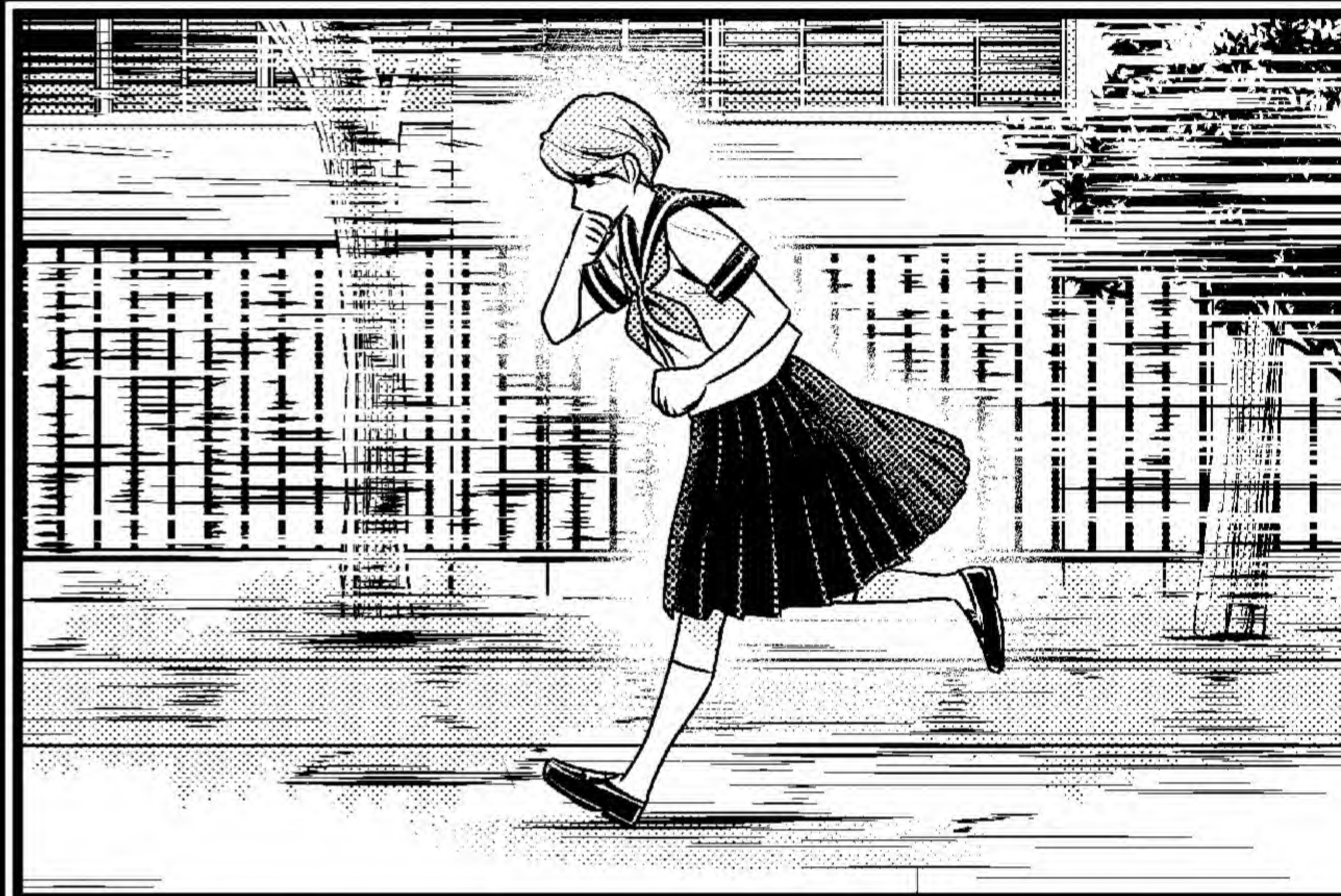
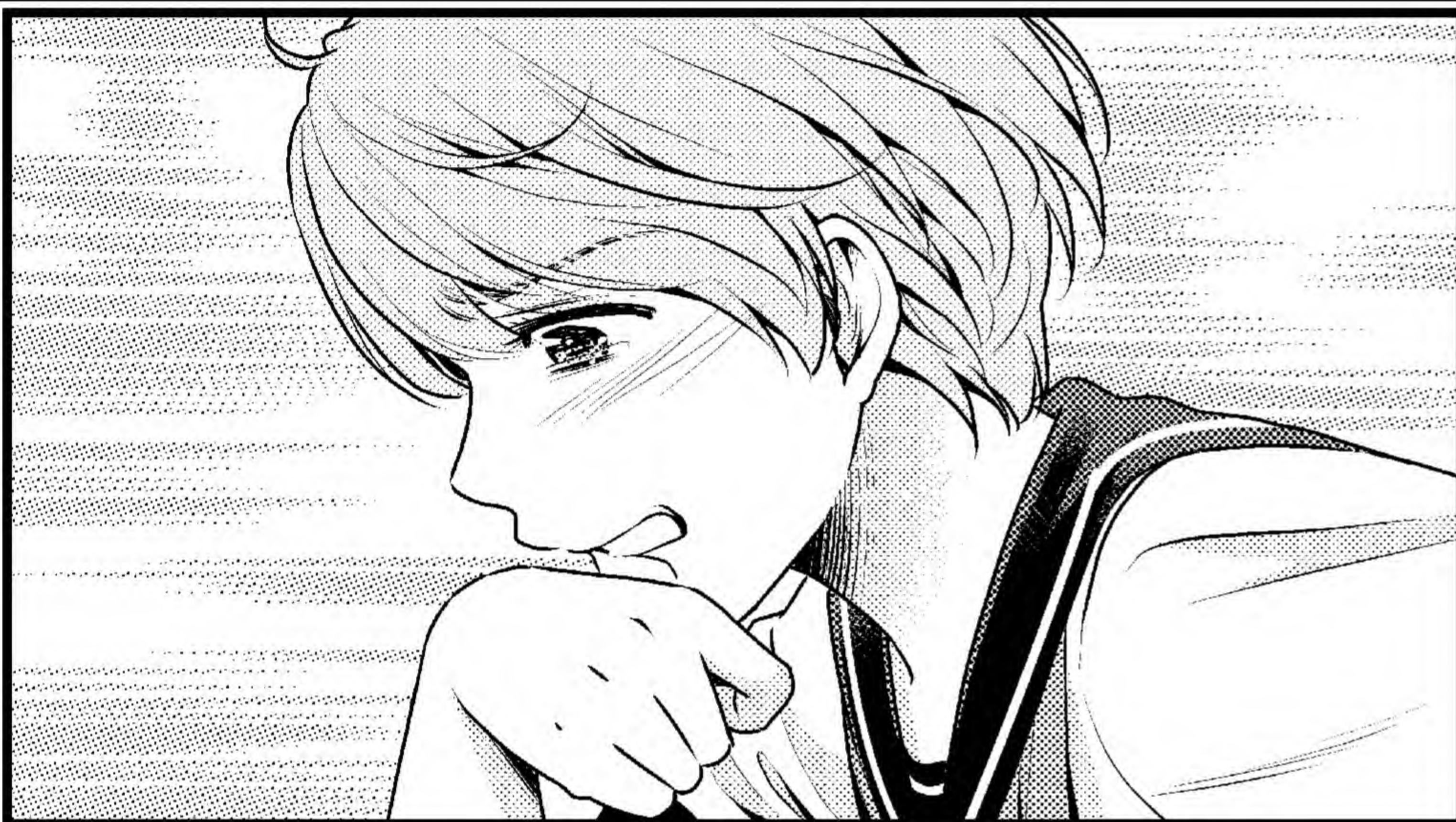


SORRY,  
WAS  
THAT TOO  
SOON?

DASH!



...



...I'M  
ALWAYS  
...

...  
HAPPY.



I WANT  
HER TO  
LISTEN  
TO ME!

I WANT  
HER  
NEARBY!

I NEVER  
FEEL LIKE  
THIS  
WHEN  
I'M WITH  
MIYABI.

WHEN-  
EVER  
I'M WITH  
HER...



WHERE'S  
MIYABI?!

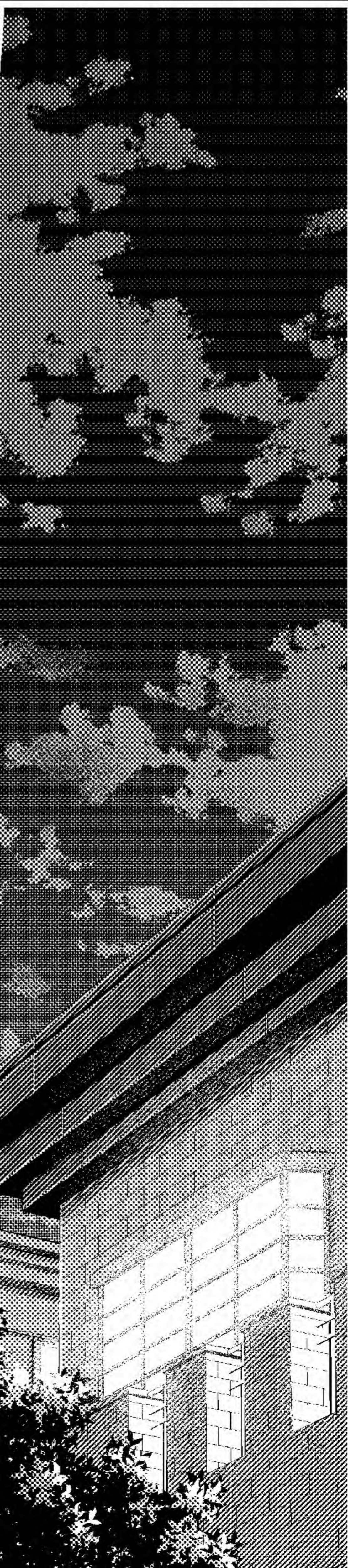
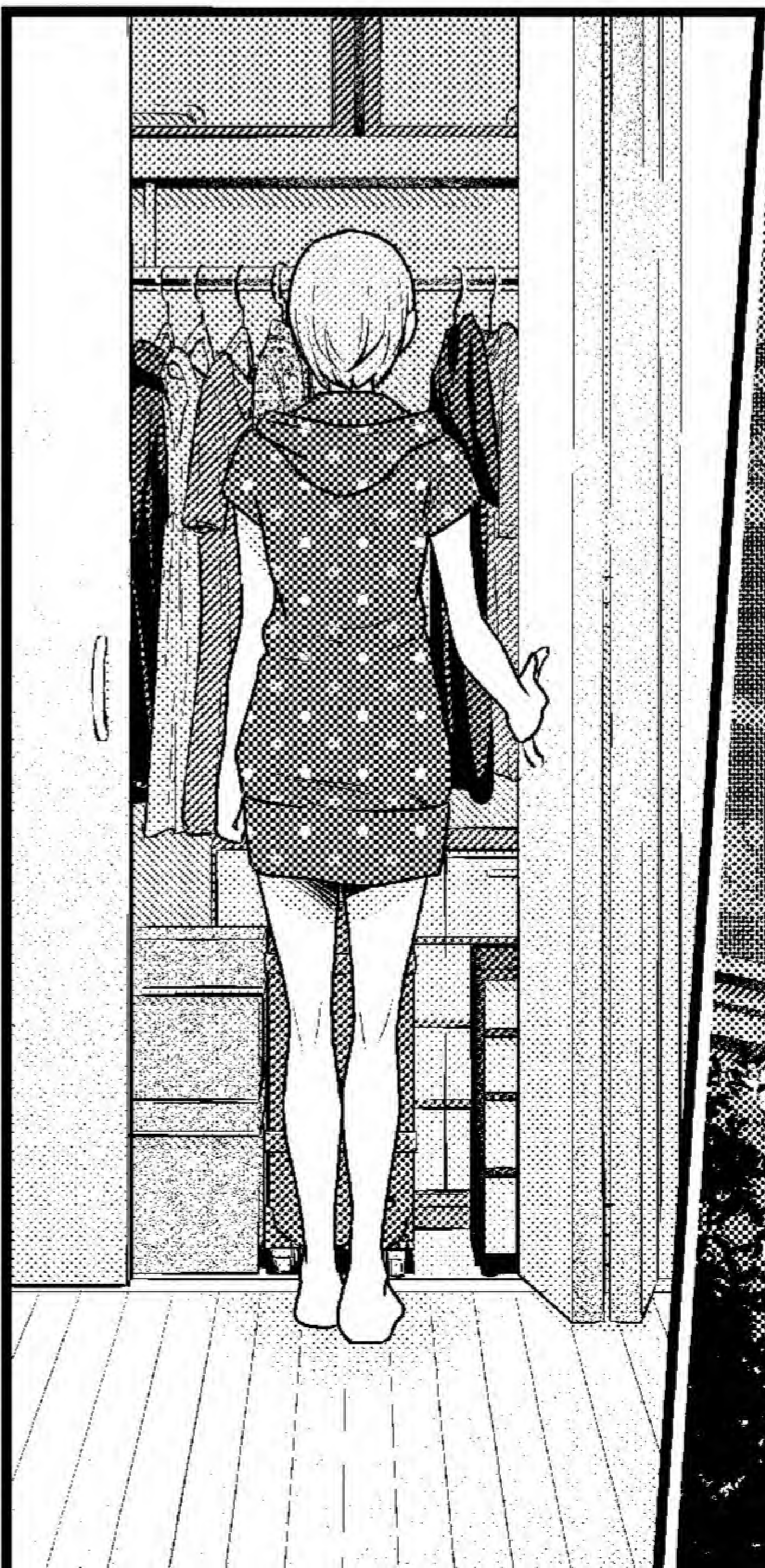
I NEED TO  
SEE HER!



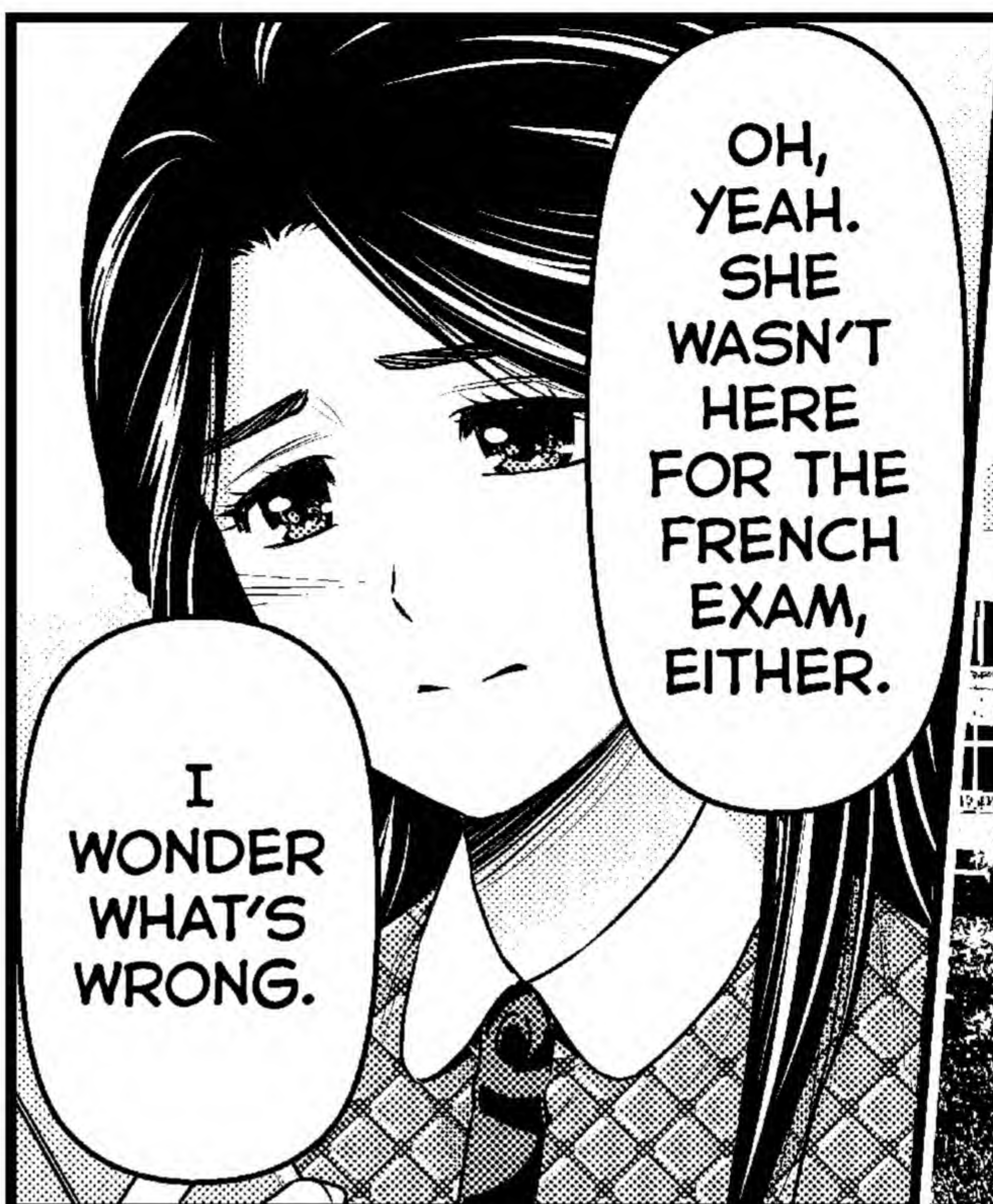
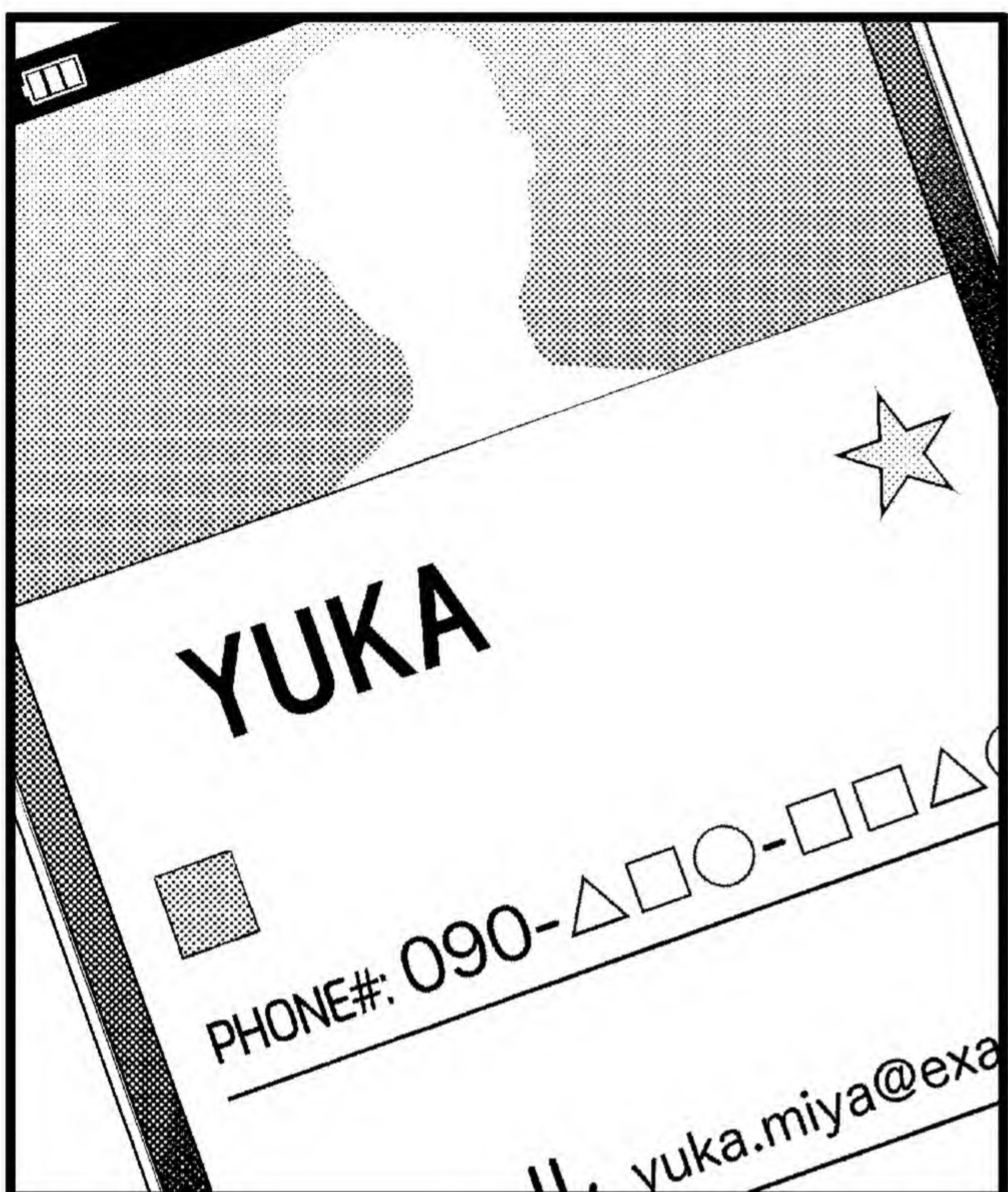
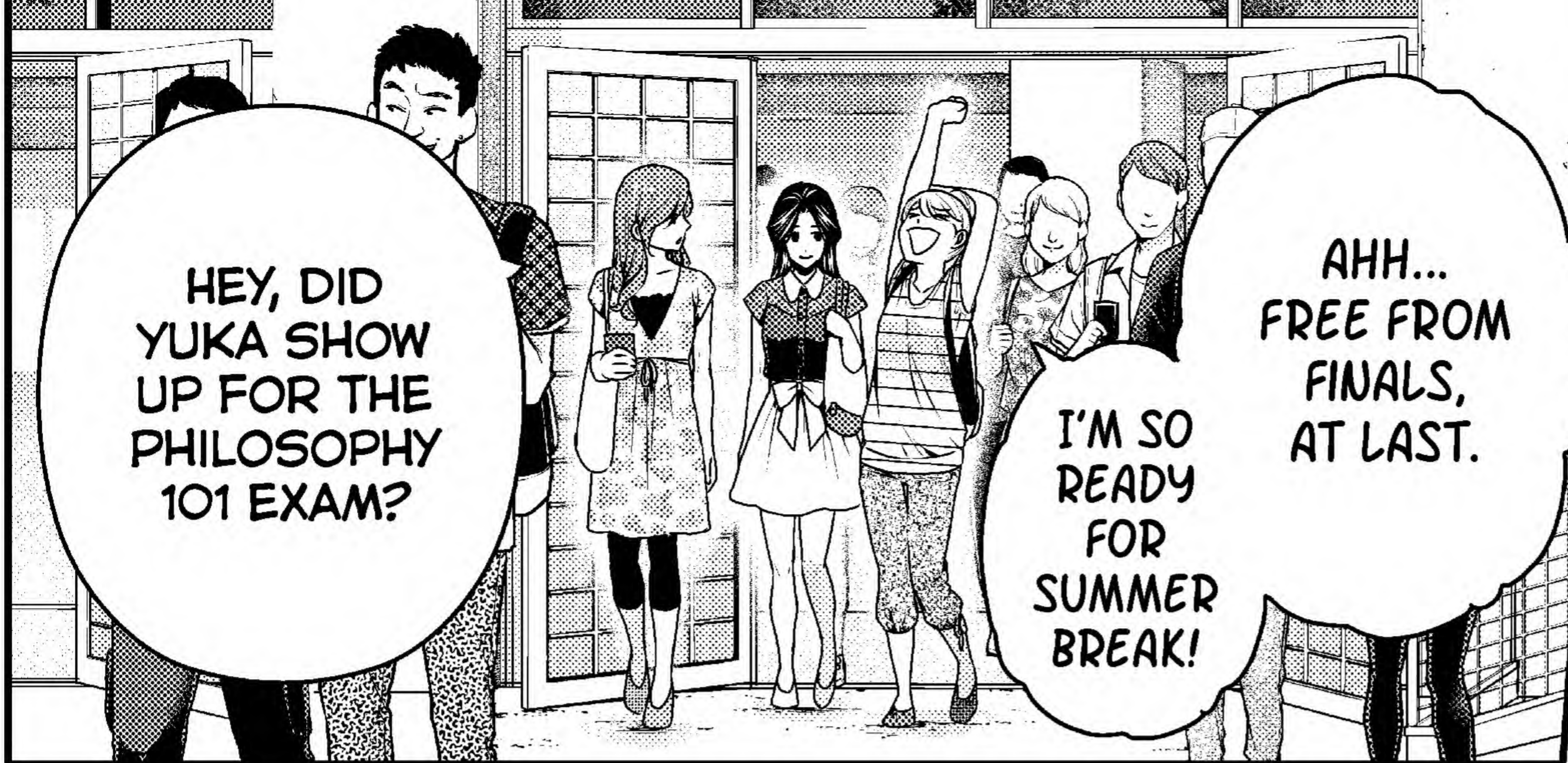
I THINK  
I...



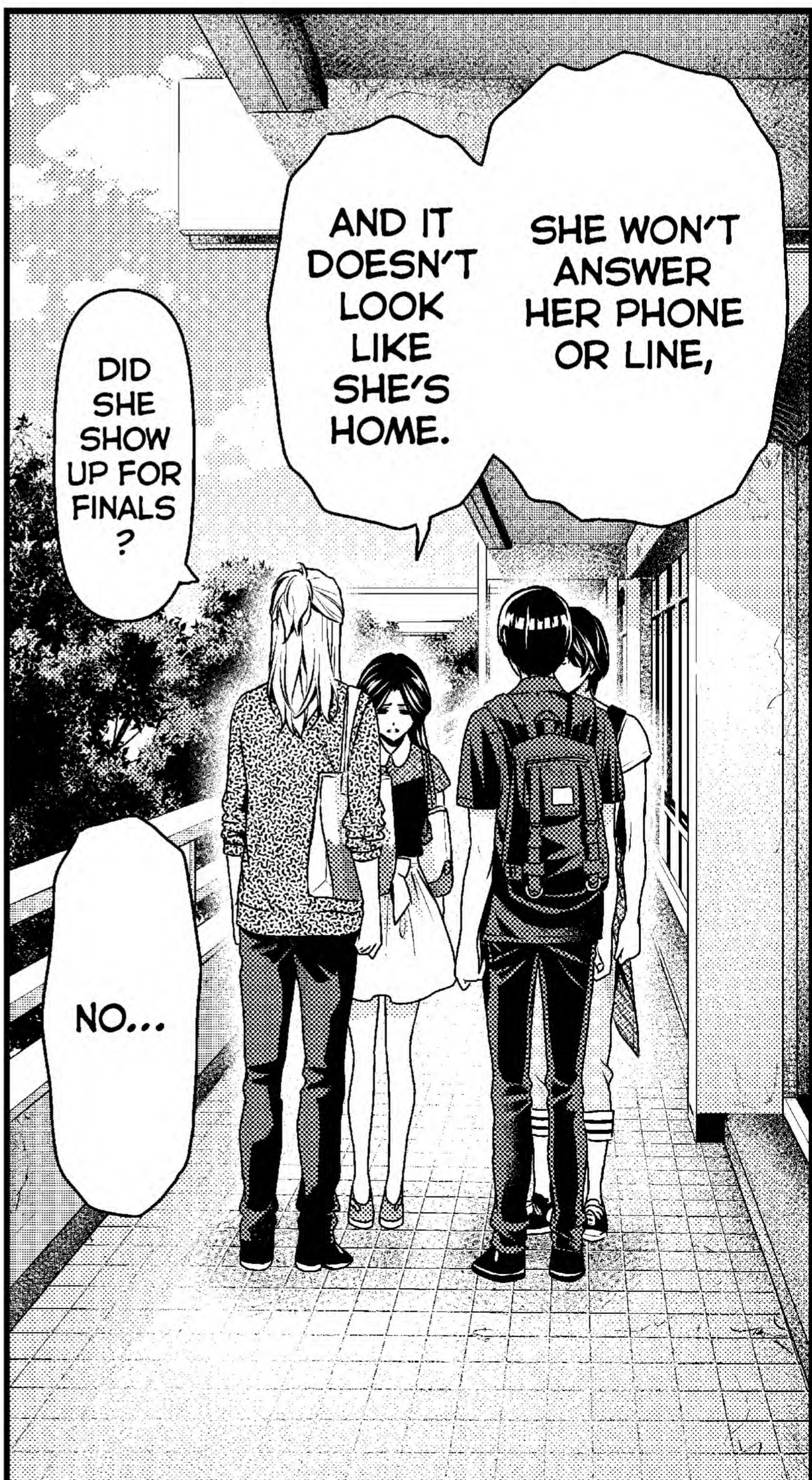
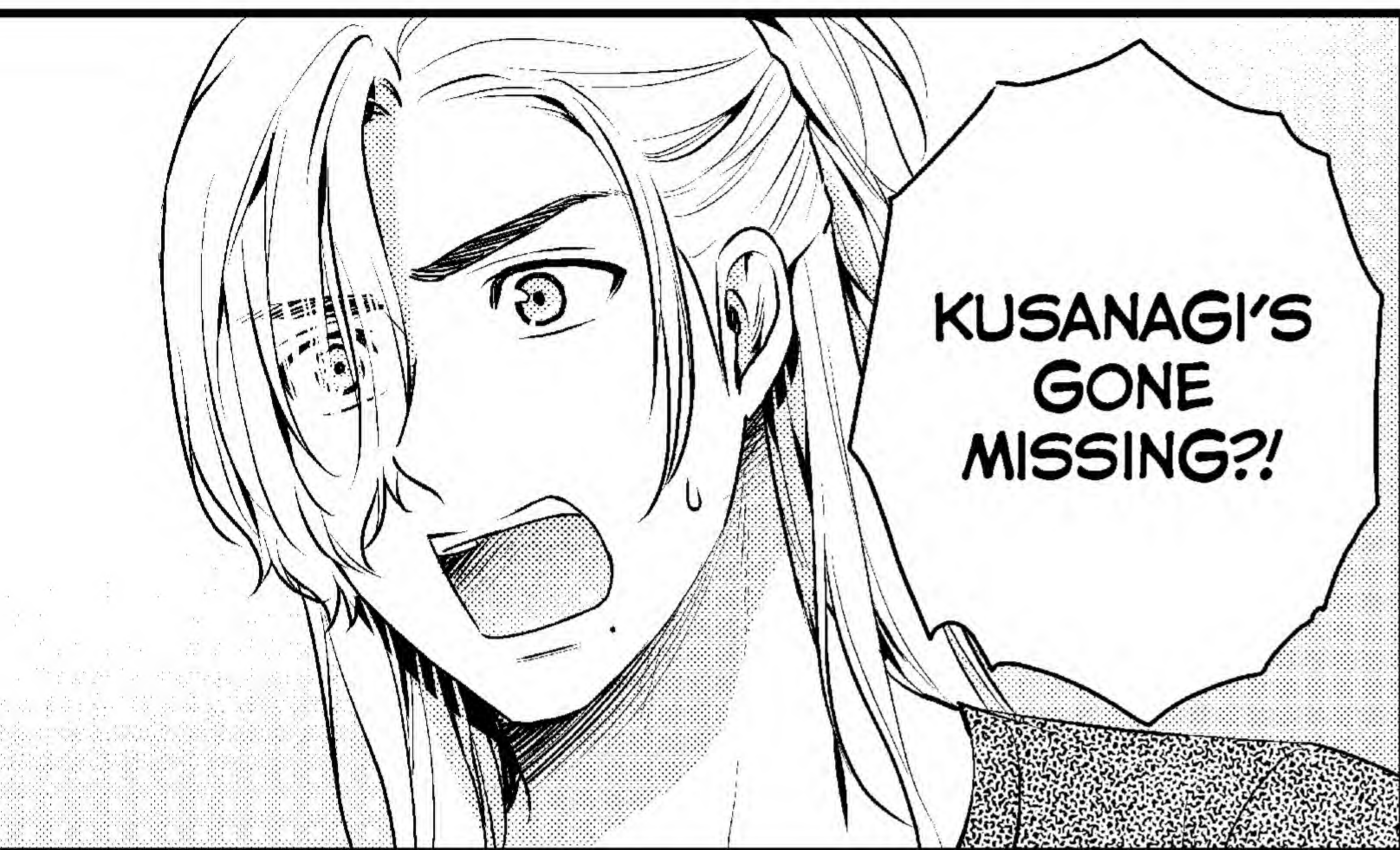
OH,  
GOD...

















THEN  
LET'S  
START  
THERE.

I  
CALLED,  
BUT I  
WAS TOLD  
SHE  
WASN'T  
HOME.

NO.

HAVE  
YOU  
GONE  
TO HER  
HOUSE  
YET?

THIS  
IS IT.

IT'S  
HUGE!

## CHAPTER 167: STILL, I...

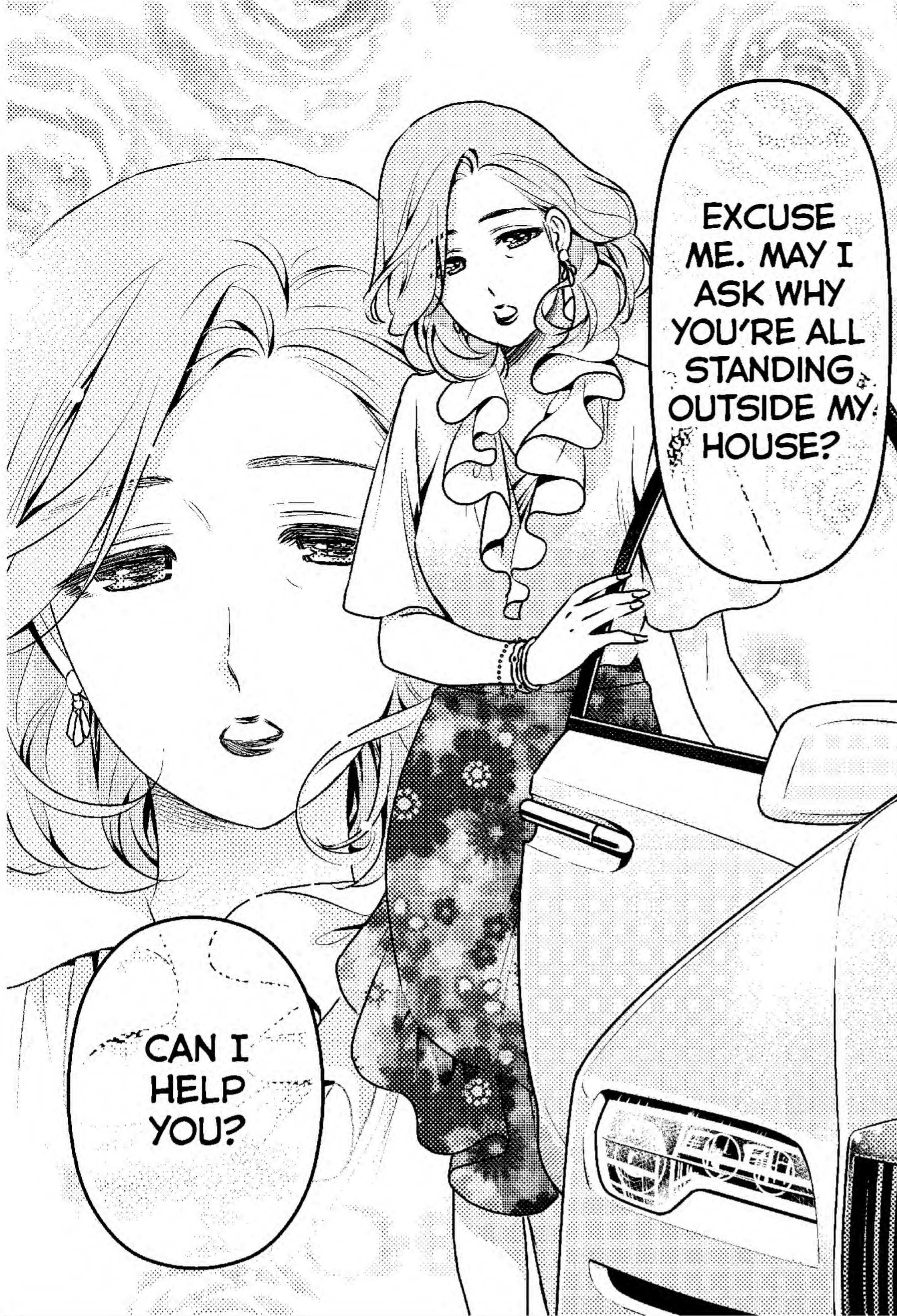
SOUNDS  
PRETTY  
RICH  
TO ME!

BUT HER  
DAD'S THE  
CEO OF  
A LISTED  
COMPANY.

I DON'T  
KNOW  
ABOUT  
RICH,

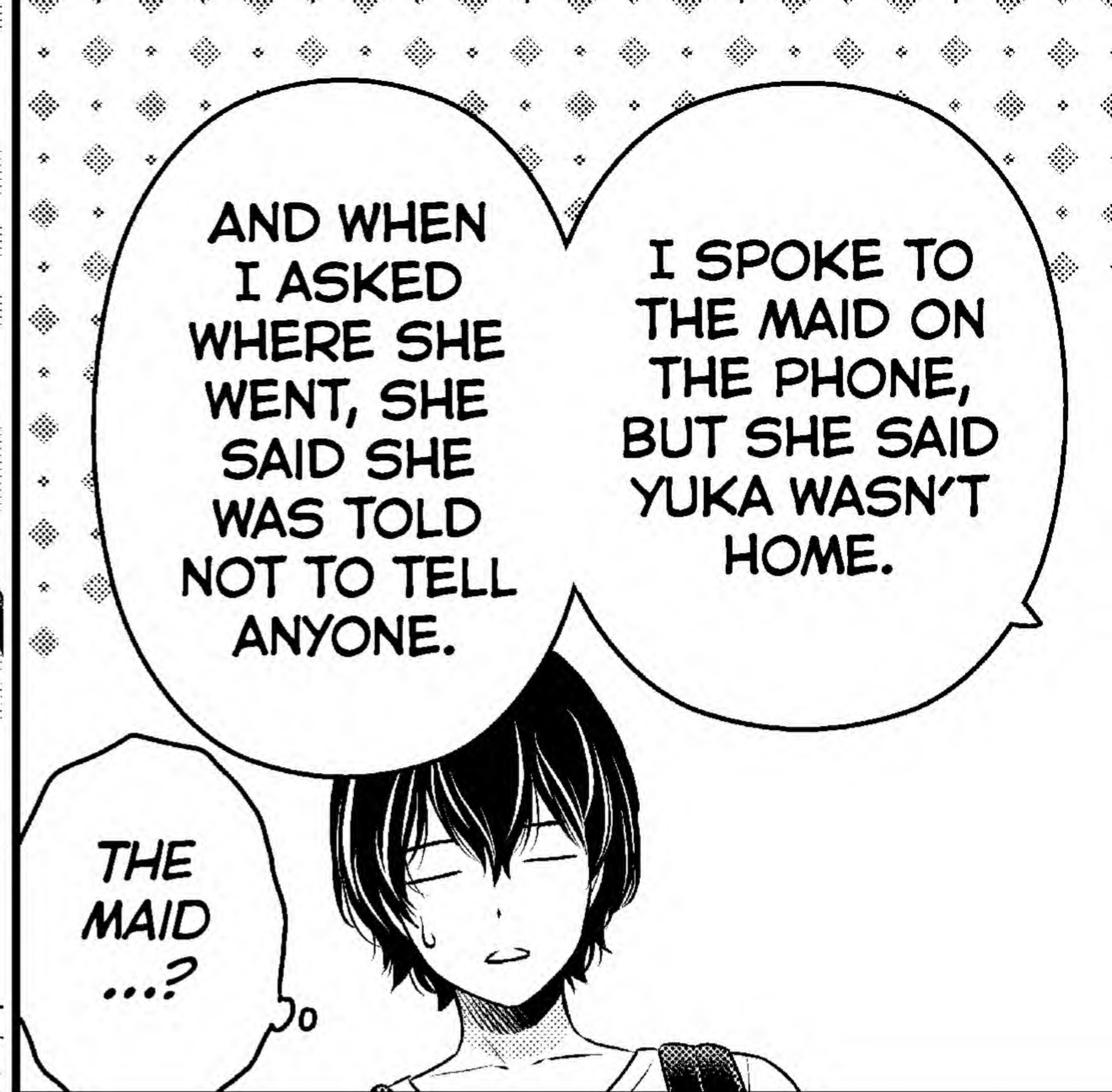
...IS  
KUSANAGI A  
RICH GIRL  
OR SOME-  
THING?





EXCUSE ME. MAY I ASK WHY YOU'RE ALL STANDING OUTSIDE MY HOUSE?

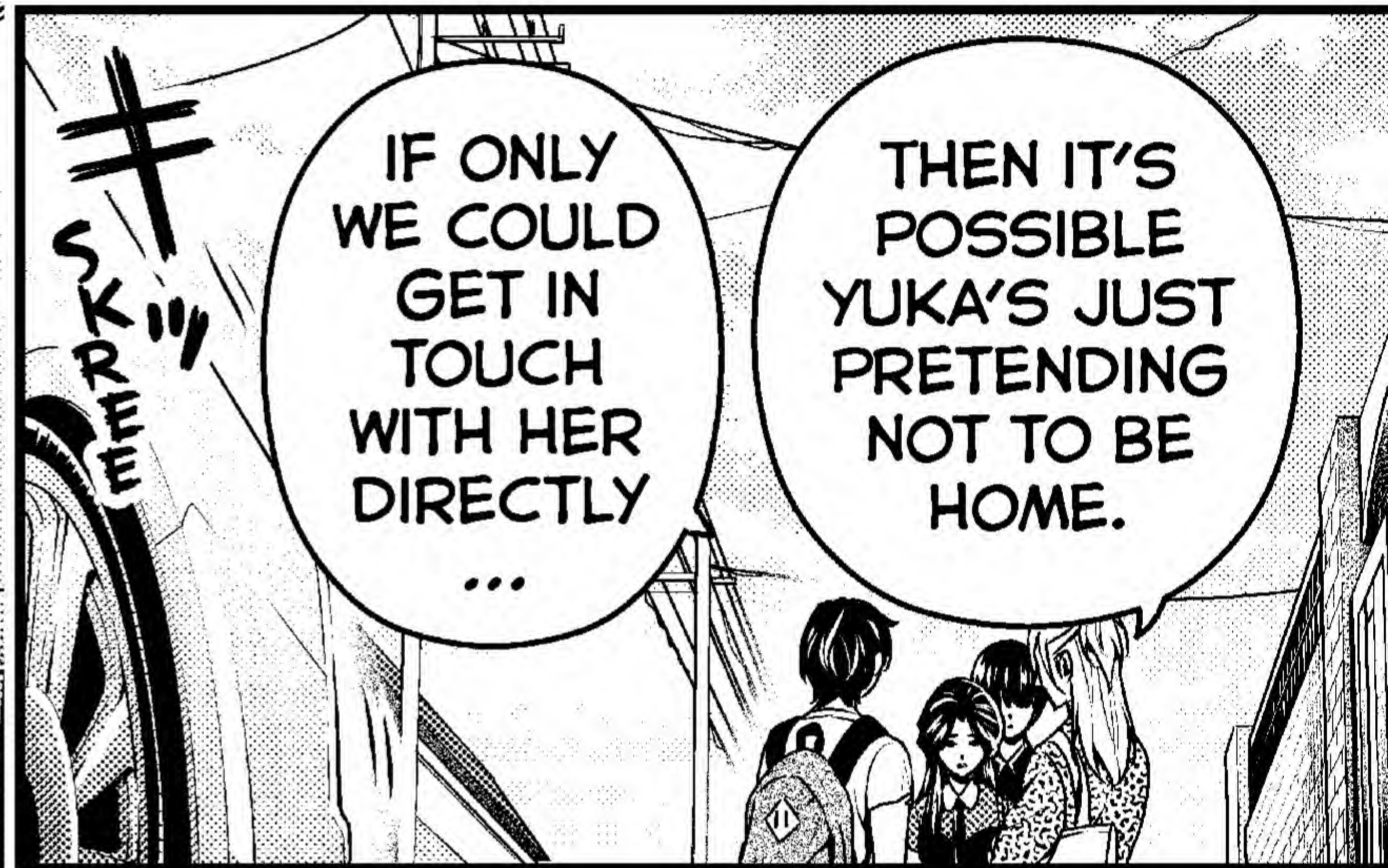
CAN I HELP YOU?



AND WHEN I ASKED WHERE SHE WENT, SHE SAID SHE WAS TOLD NOT TO TELL ANYONE.

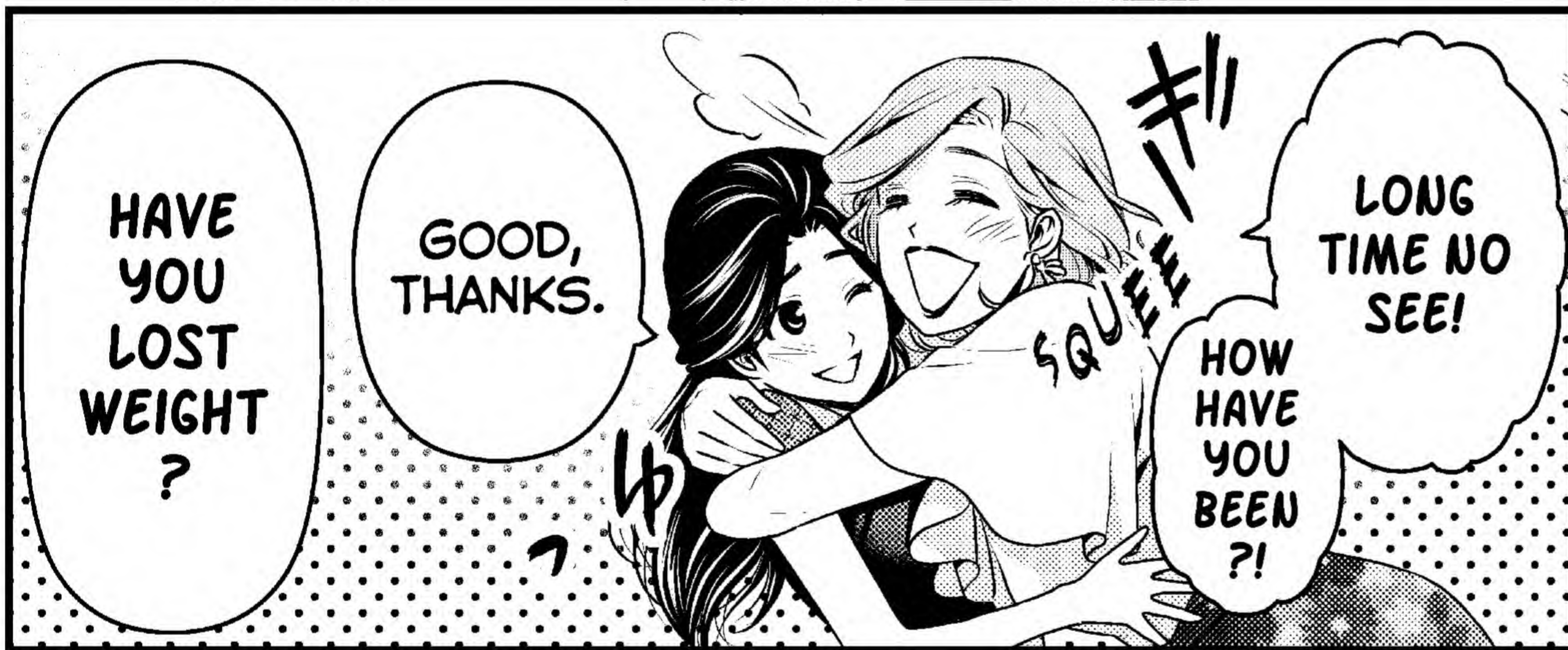
I SPOKE TO THE MAID ON THE PHONE, BUT SHE SAID YUKA WASN'T HOME.

THE MAID ...?



IF ONLY WE COULD GET IN TOUCH WITH HER DIRECTLY ...

THEN IT'S POSSIBLE YUKA'S JUST PRETENDING NOT TO BE HOME.



HAVE YOU LOST WEIGHT?

GOOD, THANKS.

LONG TIME NO SEE!

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?!



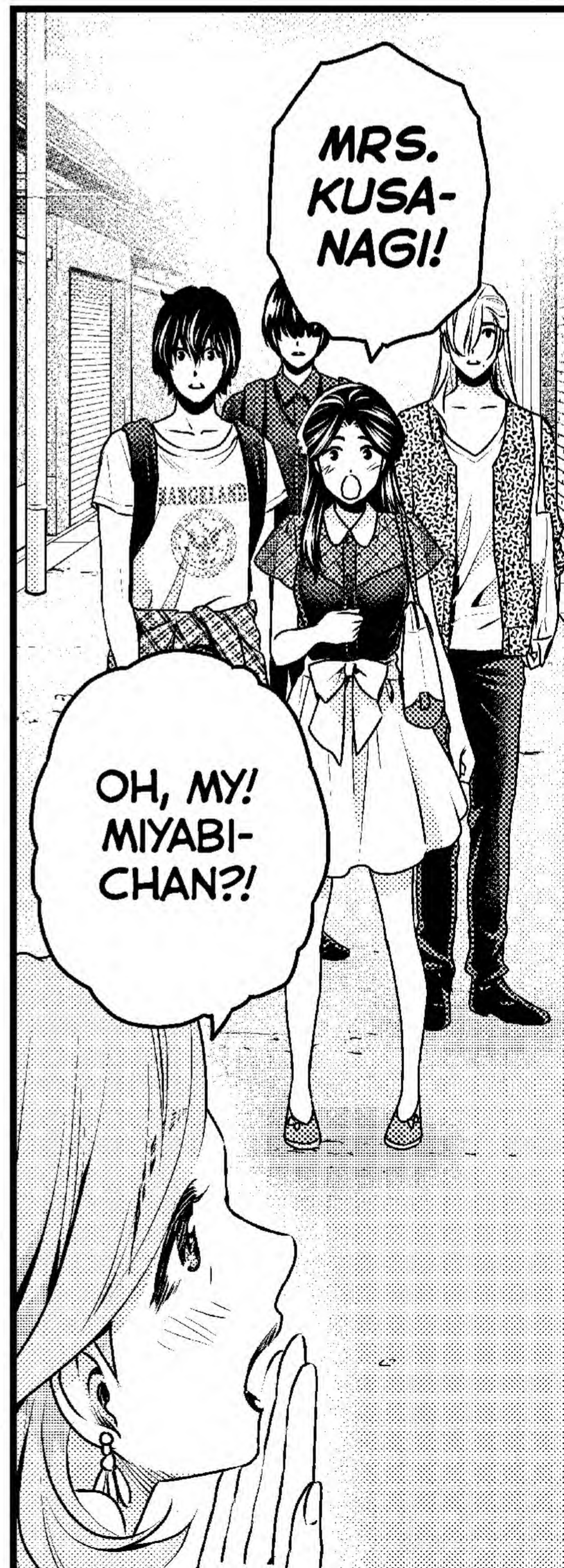
OH, DEAR! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING SUCH GOOD CARE OF MY YUKA!



AND YOU ARE?

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU. WE'RE FROM THE DRAMA CLUB.

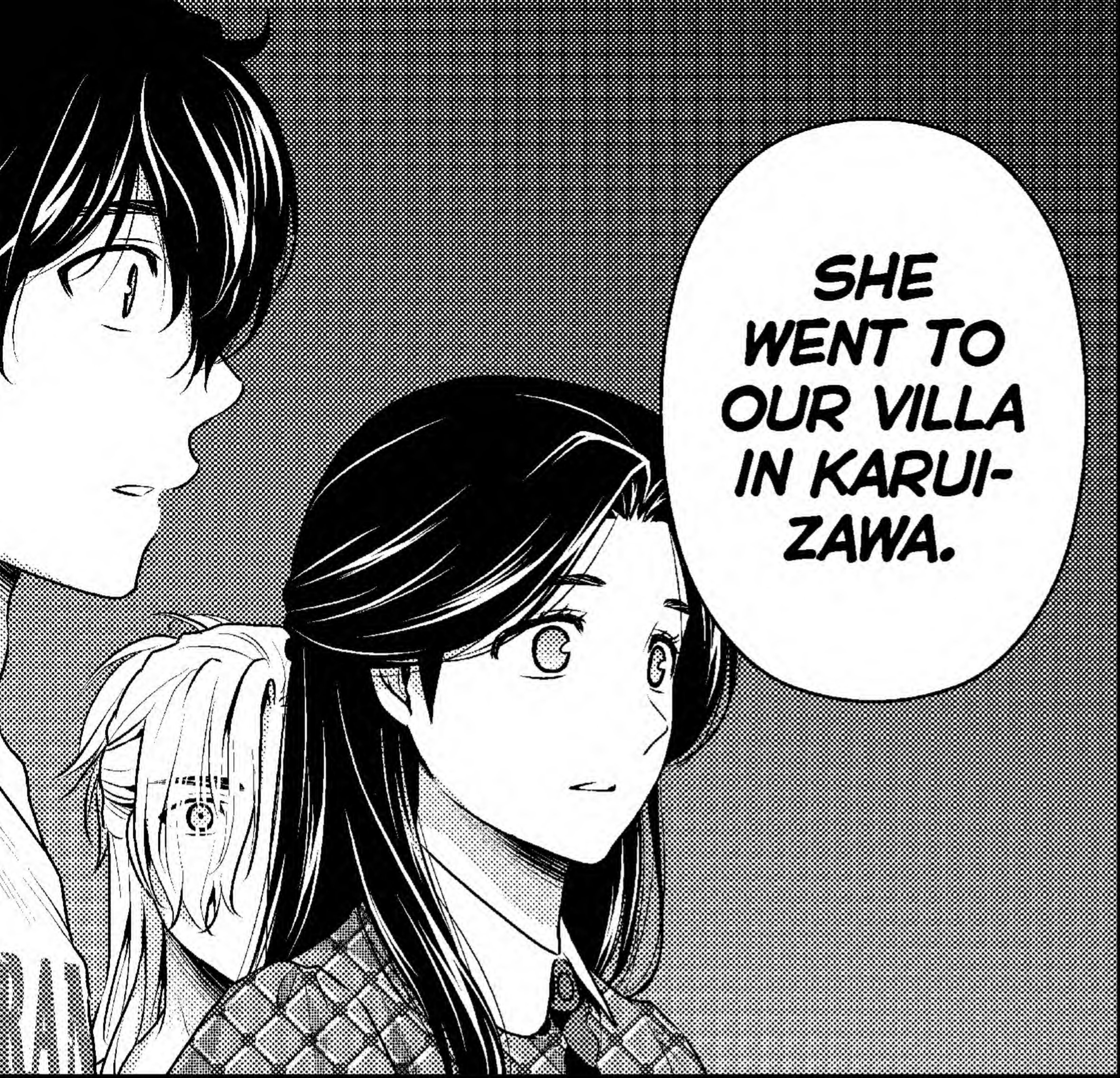
OH ...



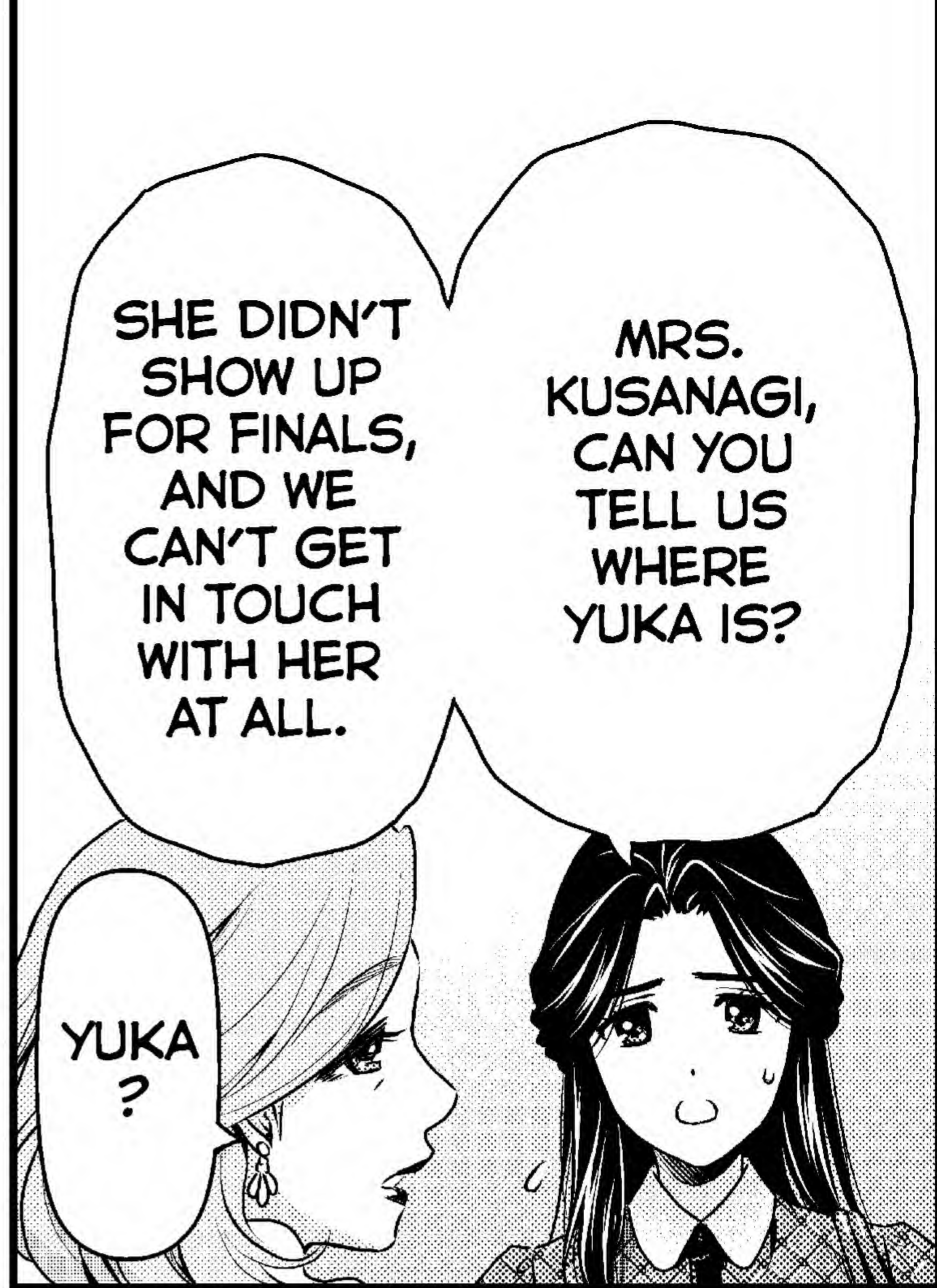
MRS. KUSANAGI!

OH, MY! MIYABI-CHAN?!





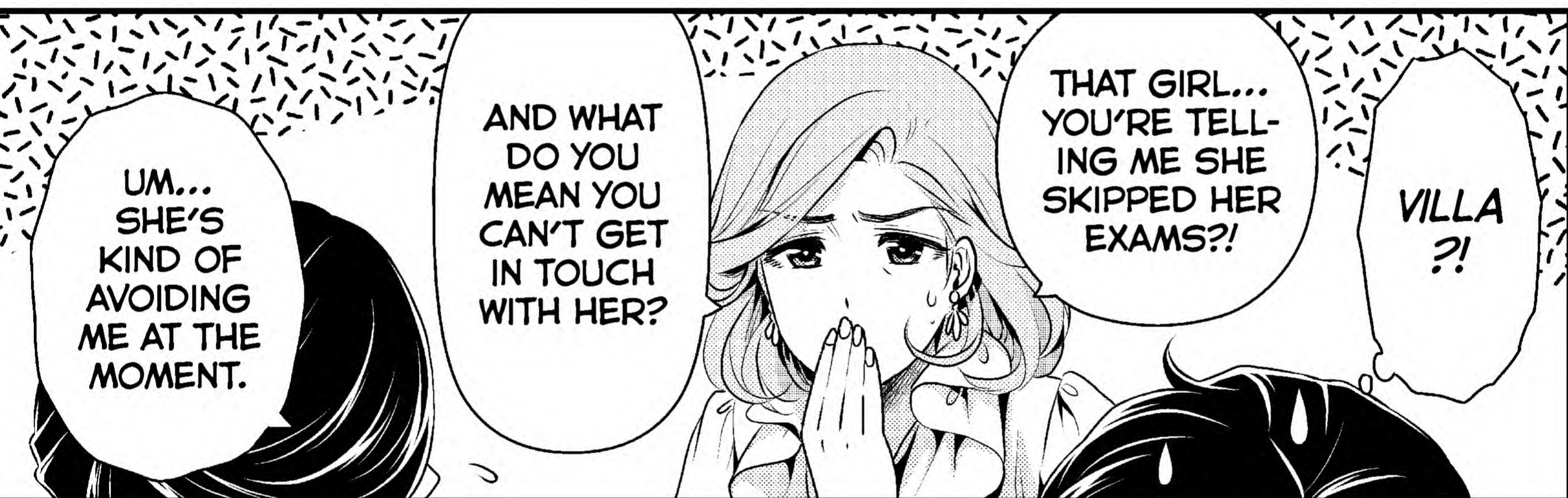
**SHE  
WENT TO  
OUR VILLA  
IN KARUI-  
ZAWA.**



**SHE DIDN'T  
SHOW UP  
FOR FINALS,  
AND WE  
CAN'T GET  
IN TOUCH  
WITH HER  
AT ALL.**

**MRS.  
KUSANAGI,  
CAN YOU  
TELL US  
WHERE  
YUKA IS?**

**YUKA  
?**



**UM...  
SHE'S  
KIND OF  
AVOIDING  
ME AT THE  
MOMENT.**

**AND WHAT  
DO YOU  
MEAN YOU  
CAN'T GET  
IN TOUCH  
WITH HER?**

**THAT GIRL...  
YOU'RE TELL-  
ING ME SHE  
SKIPPED HER  
EXAMS?!**

**VILLA  
?!**



**DON'T YOU  
HANG UP ON ME,  
YOU UNGRATEFUL  
LITTLE BRAT!  
I'M YOUR  
MOTHER,  
DAMN IT!**

**IT'S OKAY!  
IF YOU  
COULD JUST  
TELL US  
WHERE THE  
VILLA IS...!**

**MRS.  
KUSA-  
NAGI!**



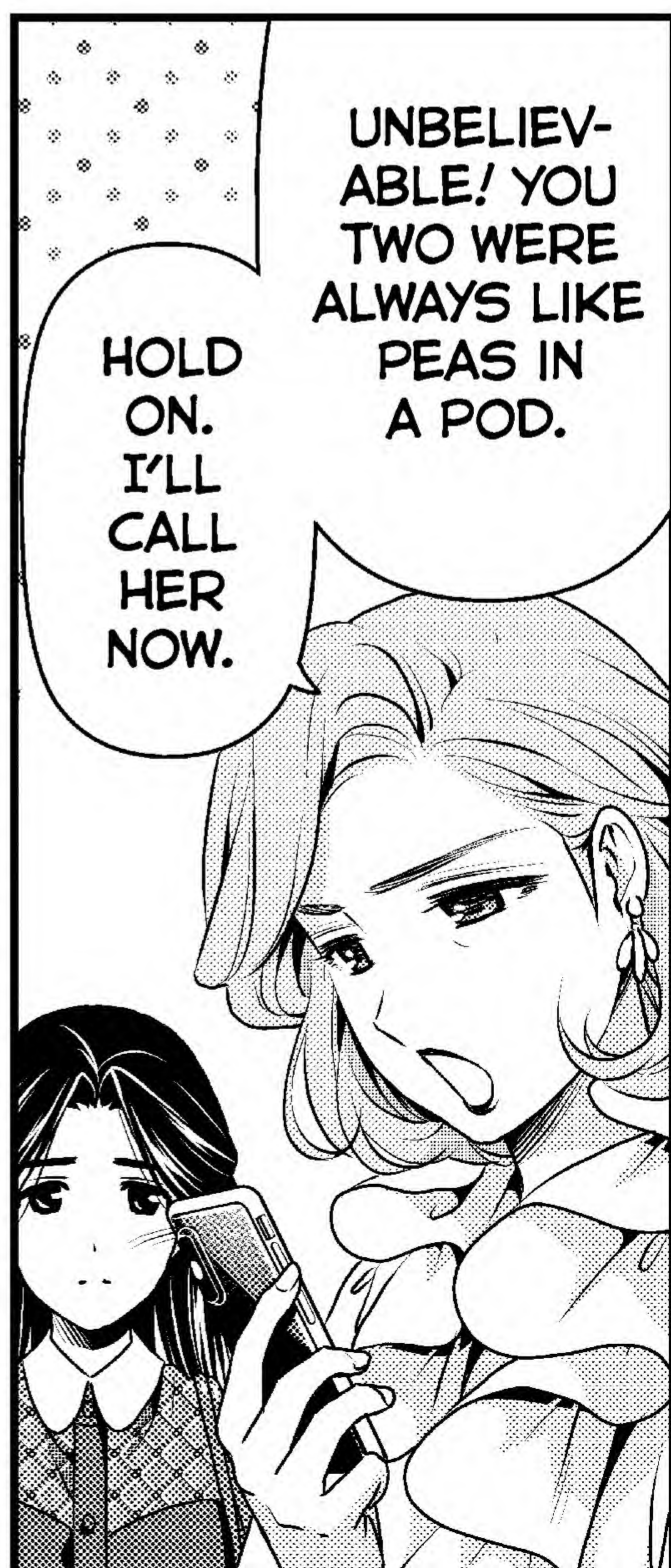
**BOOP  
BOOP  
BOOP**



**I'M WITH  
MIYABI-  
CHAN  
RIGHT NOW  
AND—**

**OH,  
YUKA?  
IT'S  
ME.**

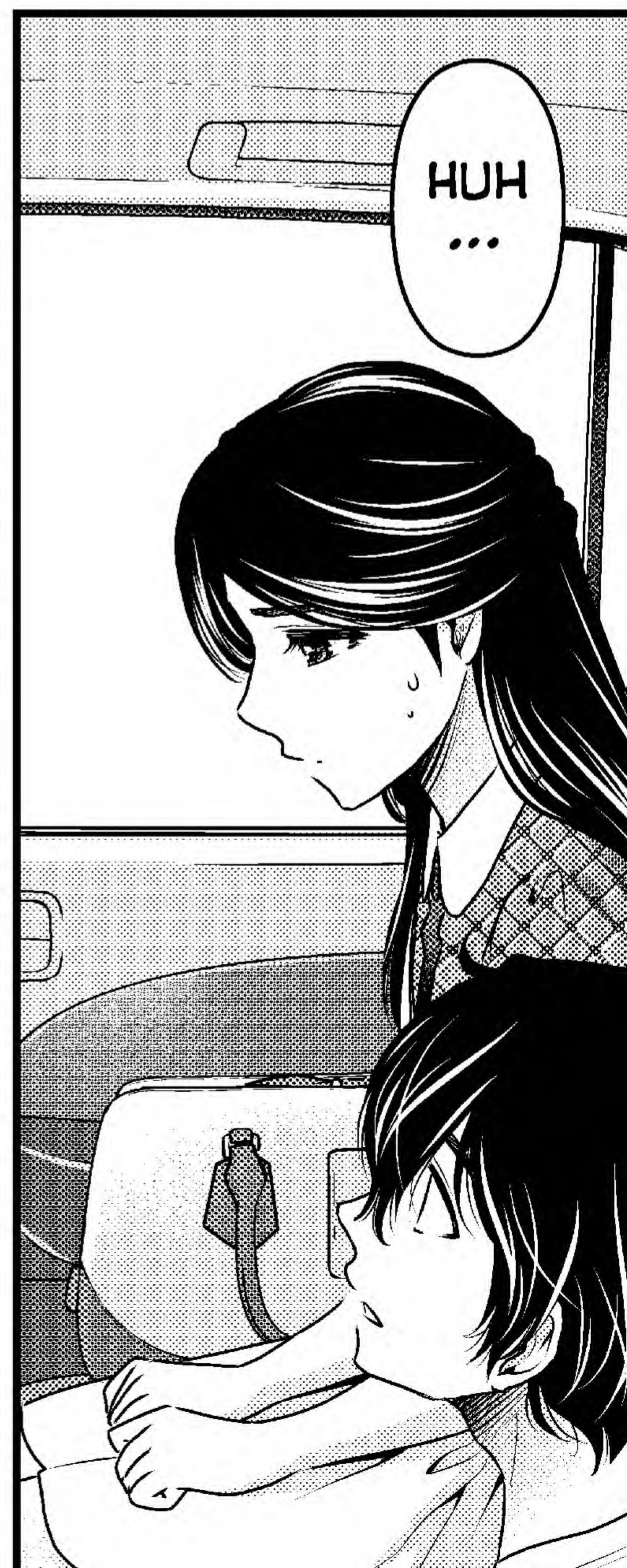
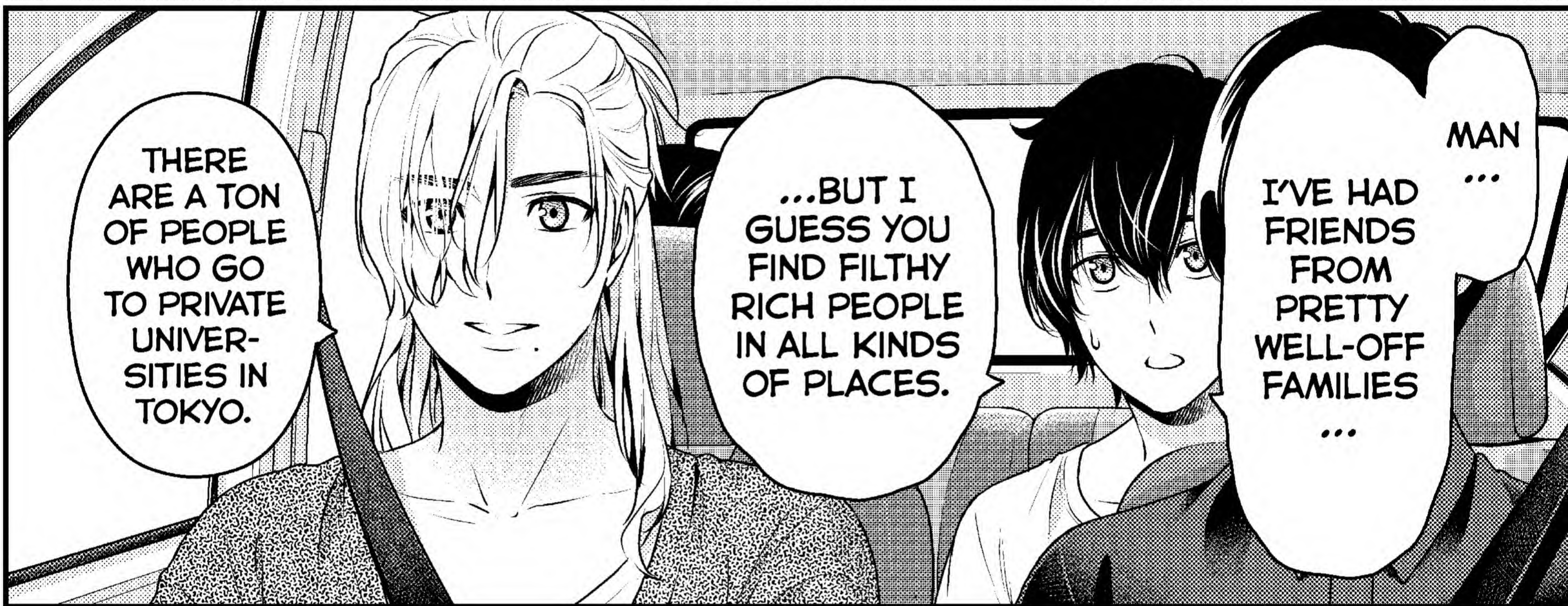
**BIZ**



**UNBELIEV-  
ABLE! YOU  
TWO WERE  
ALWAYS LIKE  
PEAS IN  
A POD.**

**HOLD  
ON.  
I'LL  
CALL  
HER  
NOW.**









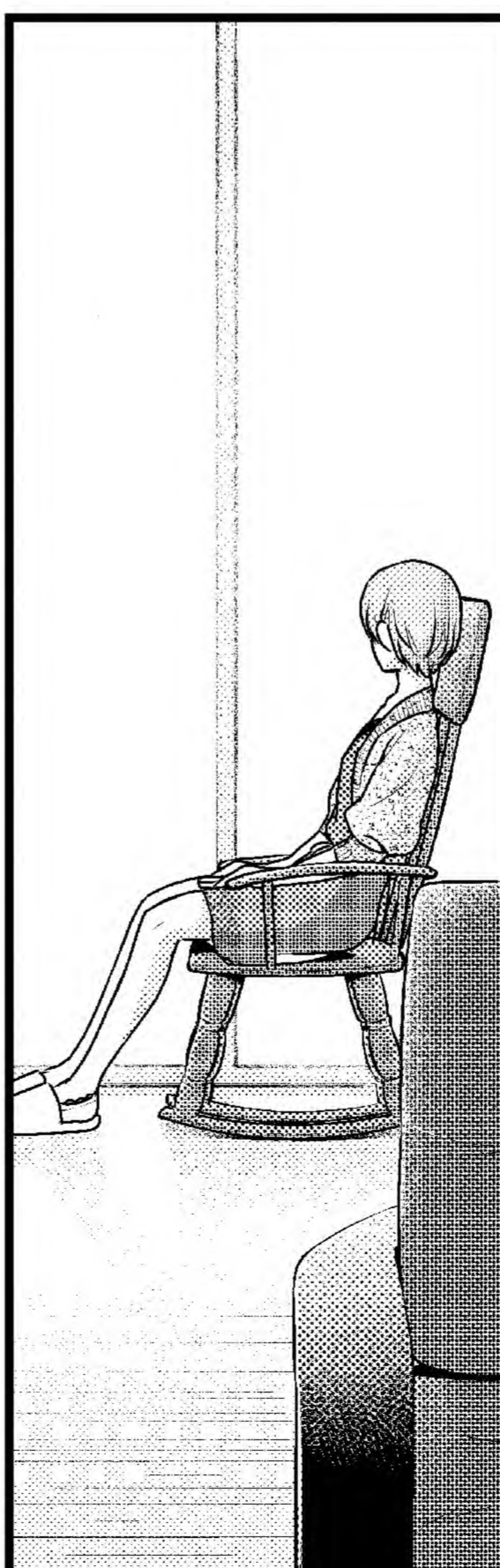
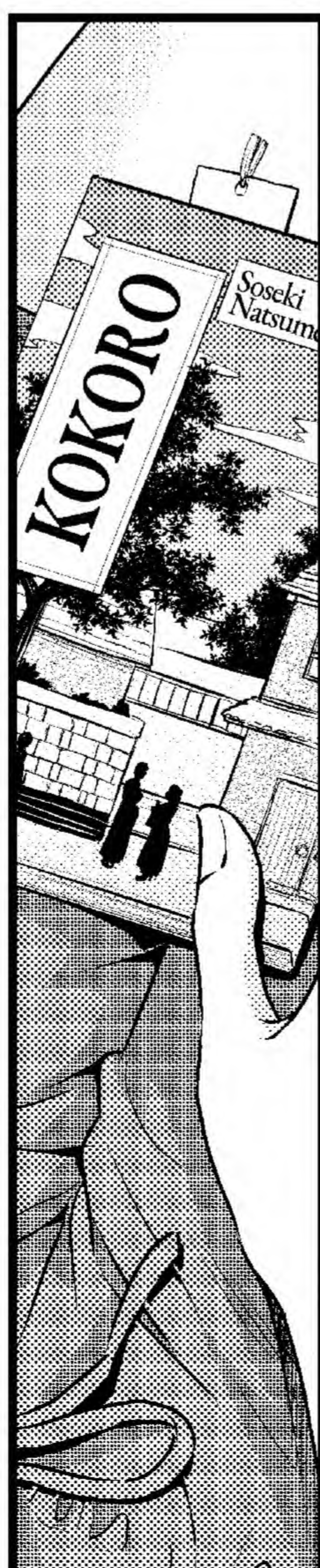
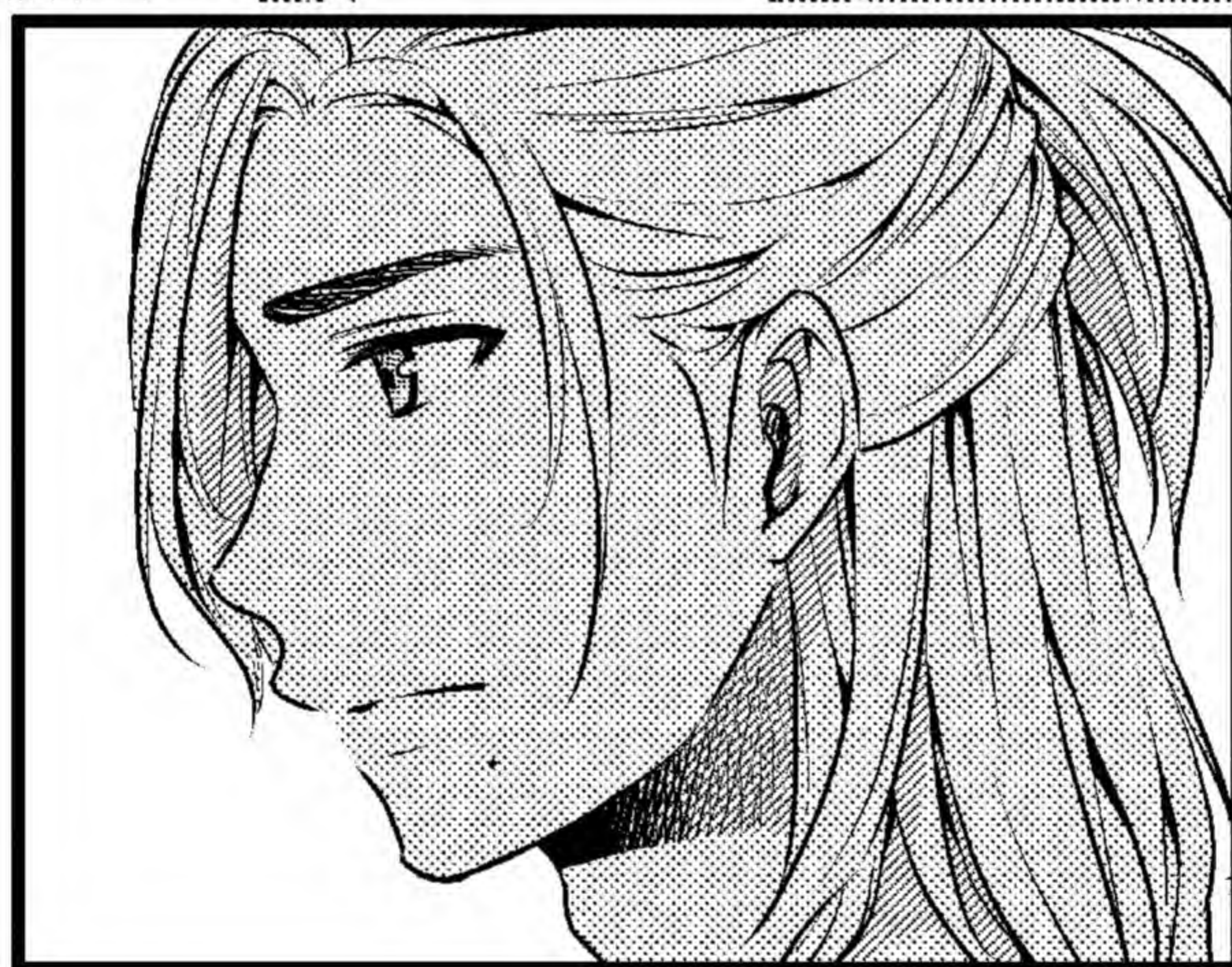
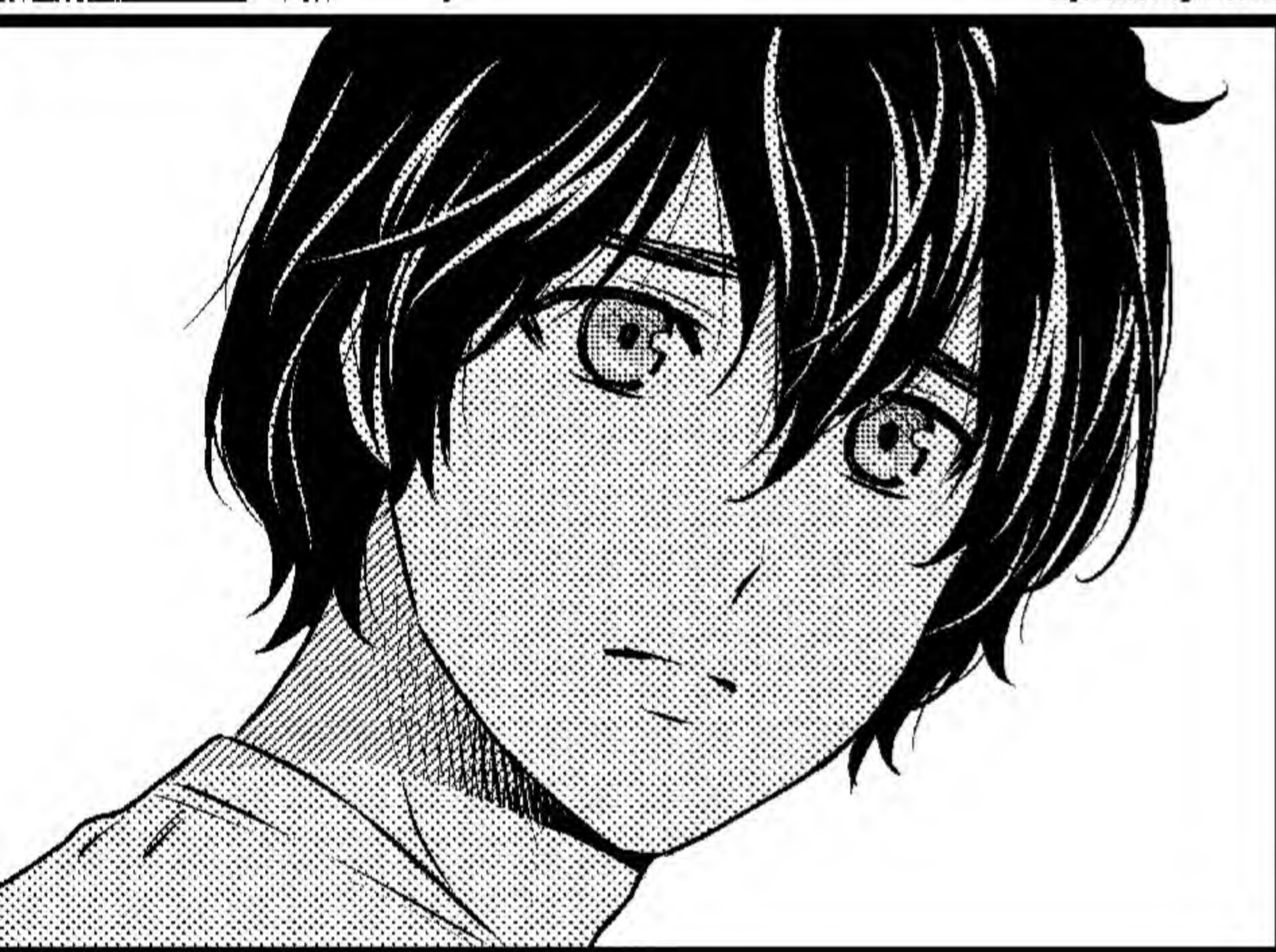
...OF  
DOING  
SOME-  
THING  
STUPID.

I'M SO  
SCARED THAT  
SHE MIGHT BE  
THINKING...

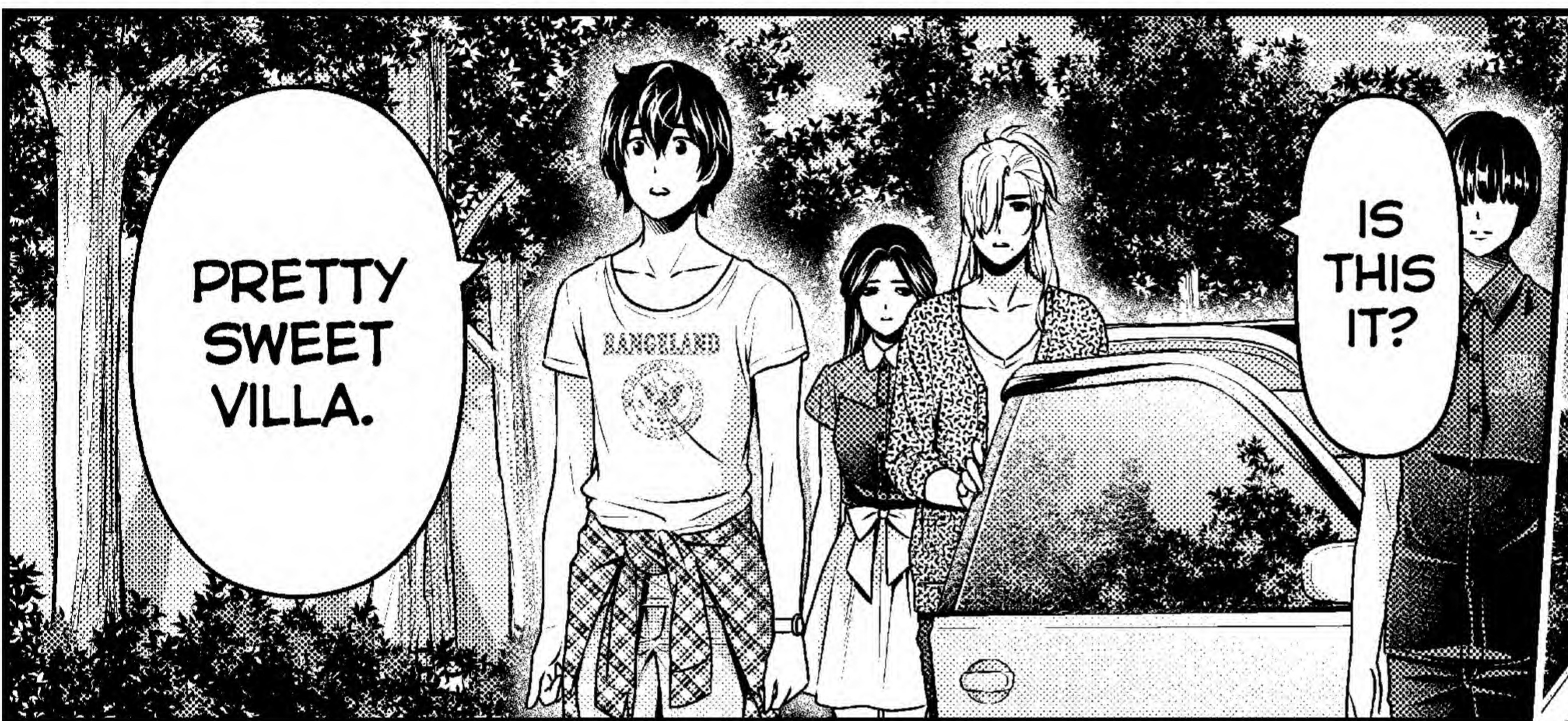
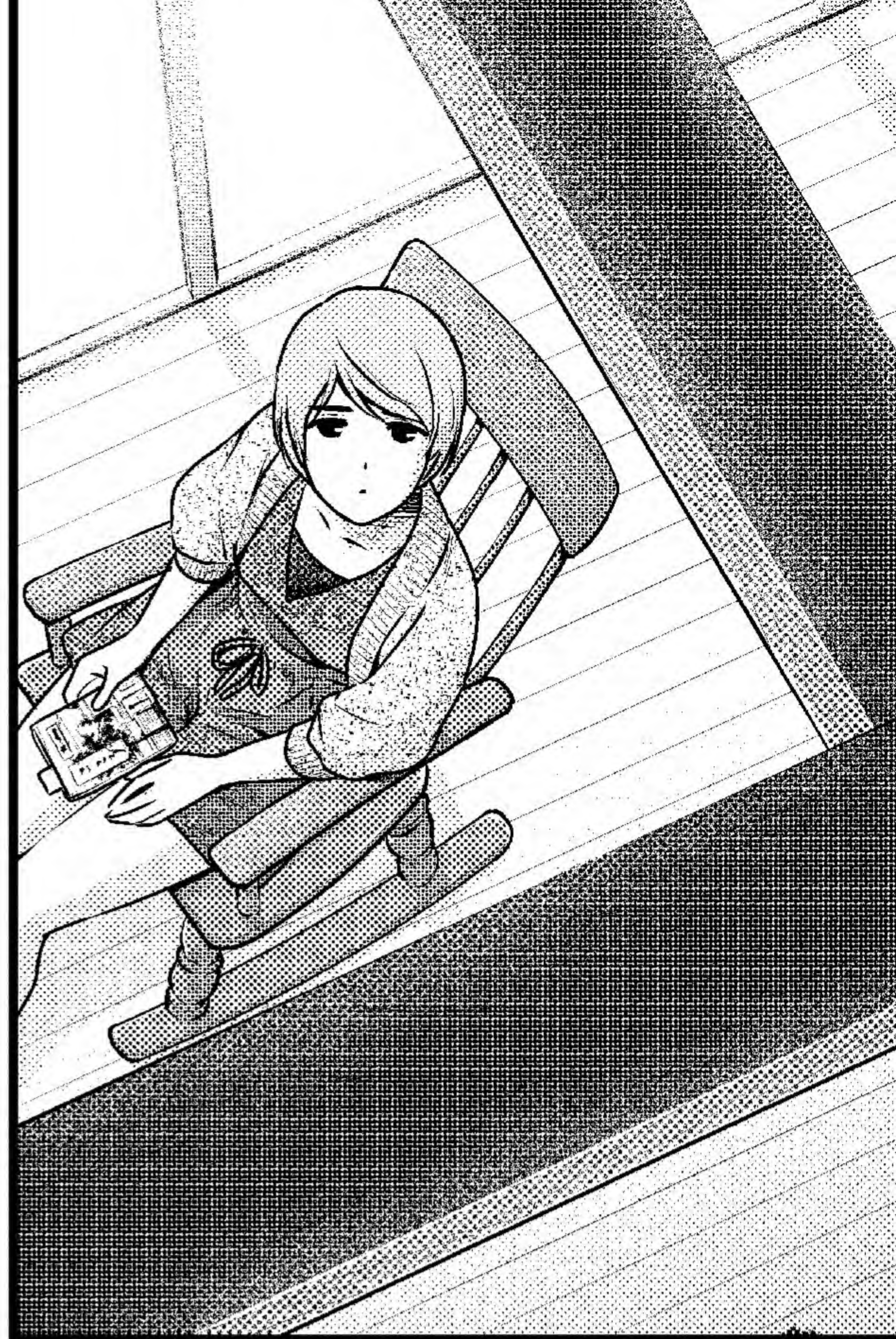
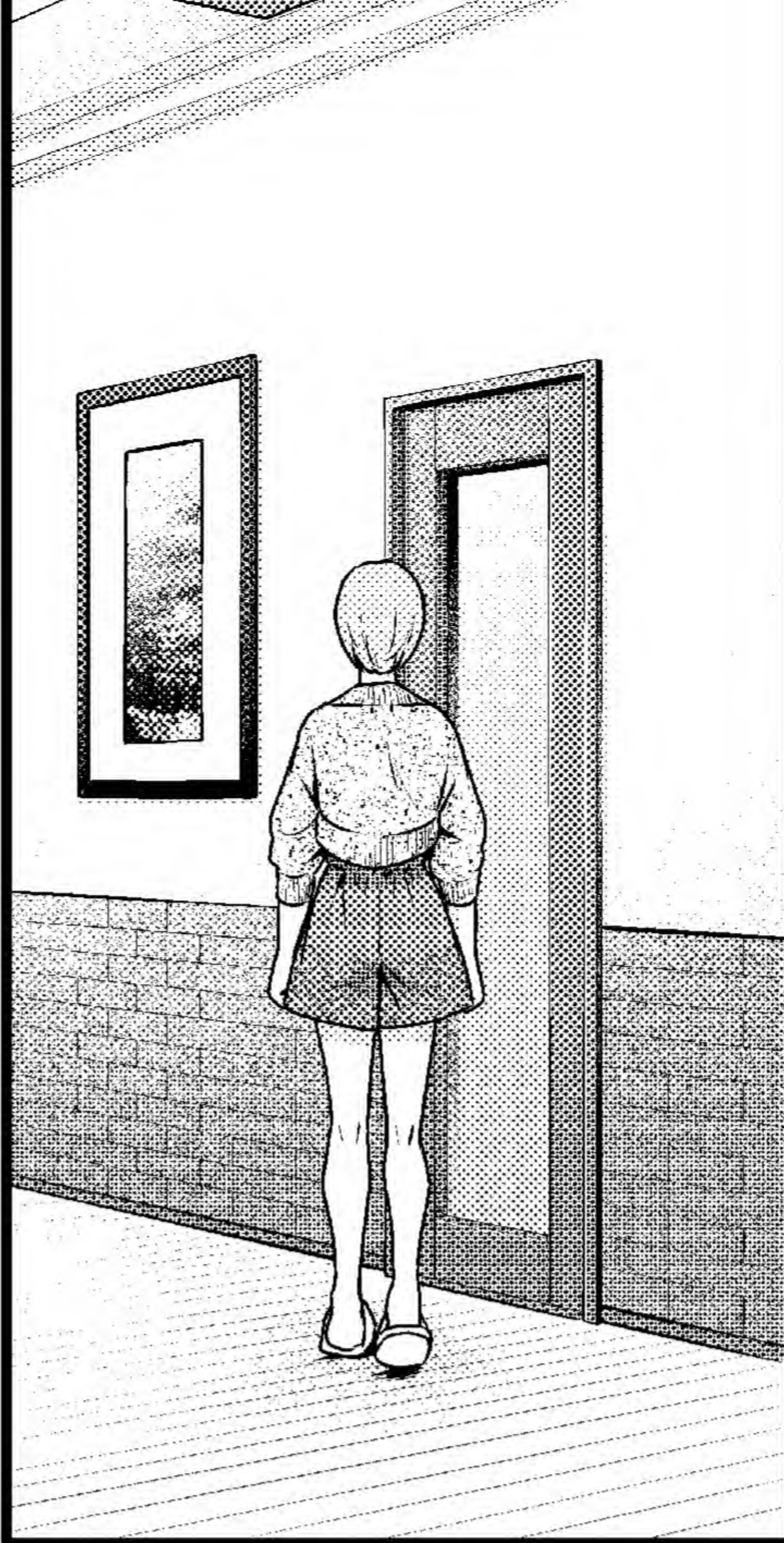
SHE NEVER  
LETS HER  
EMOTIONS  
GET THE  
BETTER OF  
HER. NOT  
LIKE ME.

YUKA'S  
ALWAYS  
SO CALM  
AND  
COLLECT-  
ED.

BUT  
RIGHT NOW,  
SHE ISN'T  
ACTING  
LIKE  
HERSELF  
AT ALL.



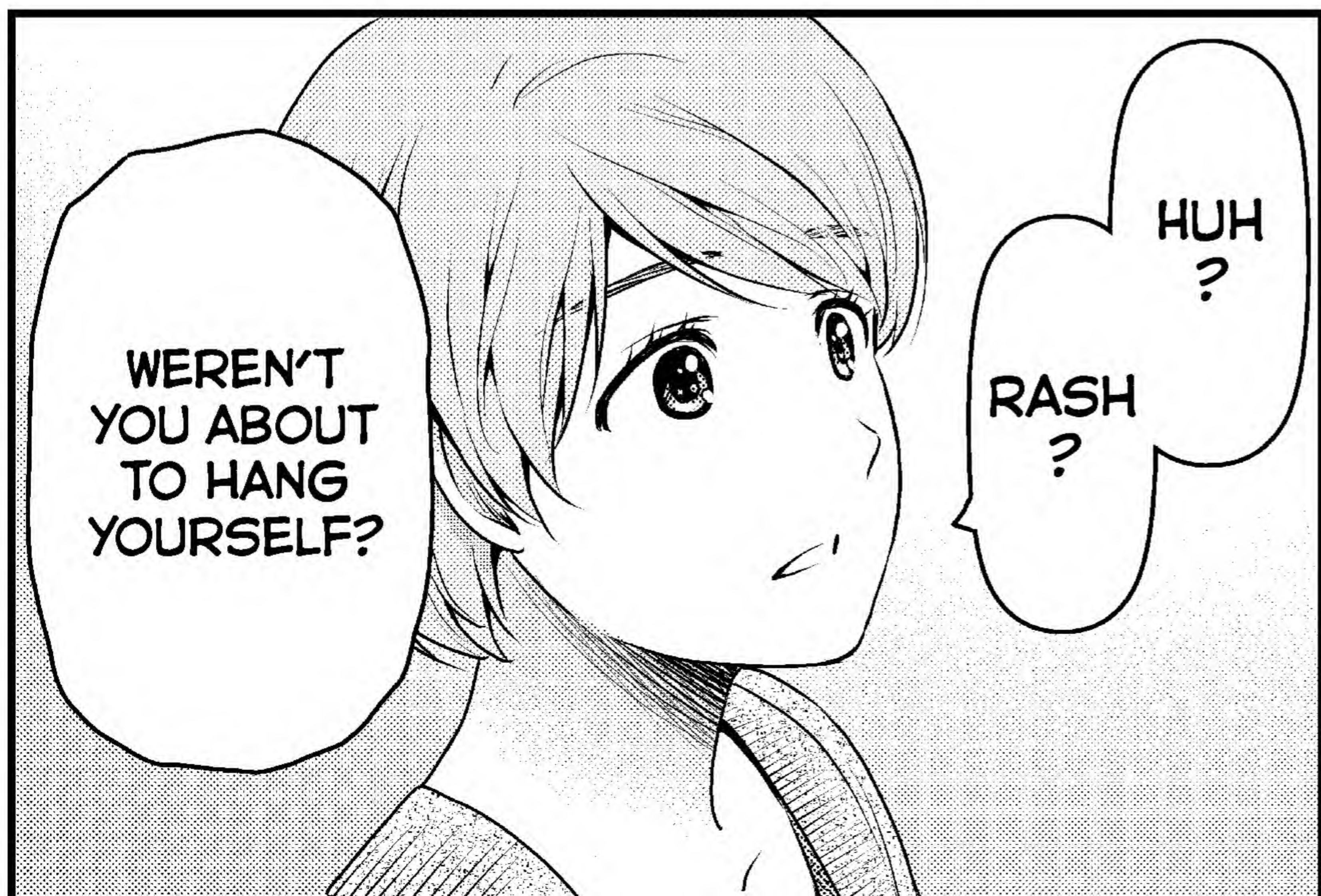
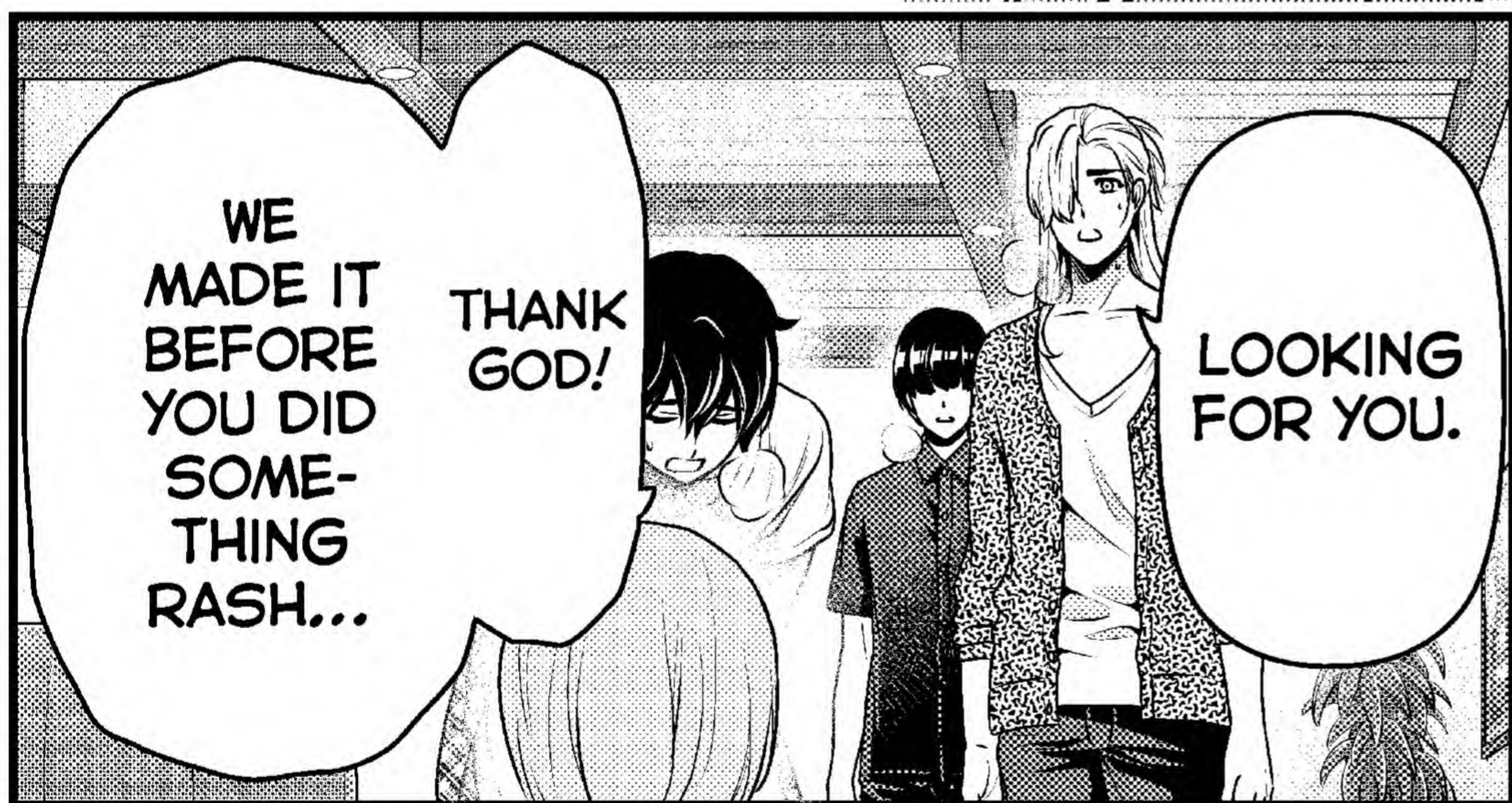




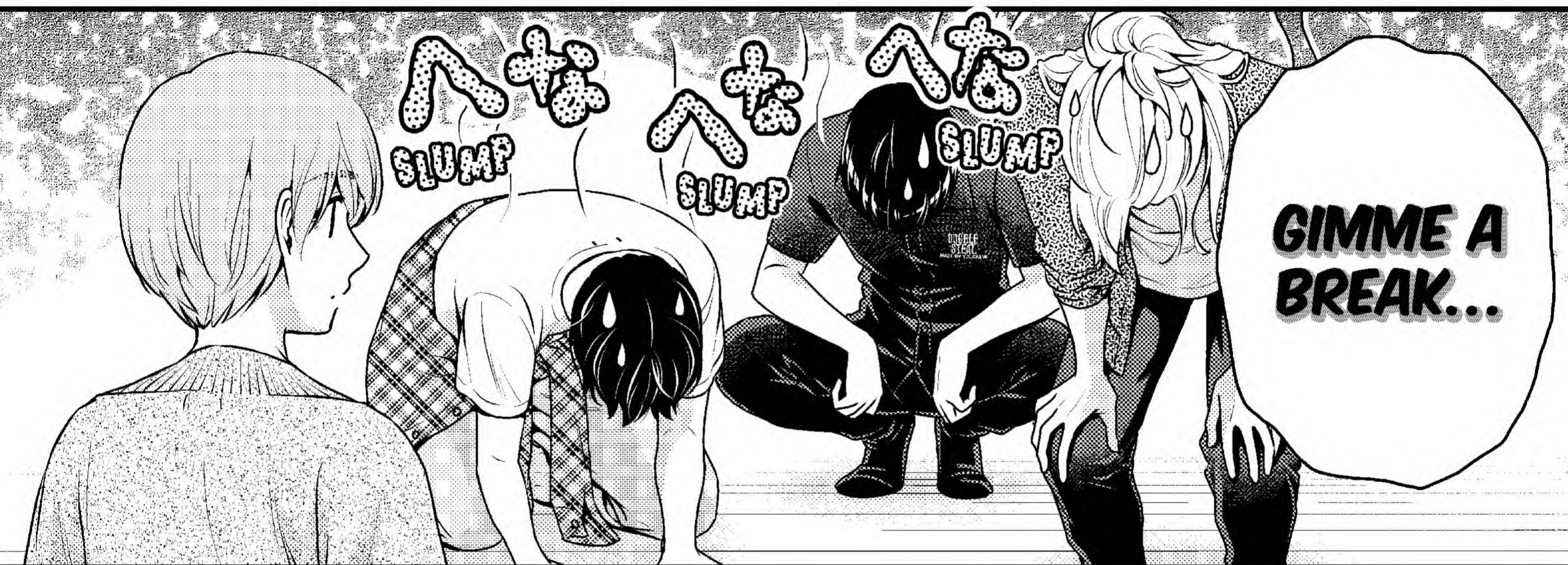
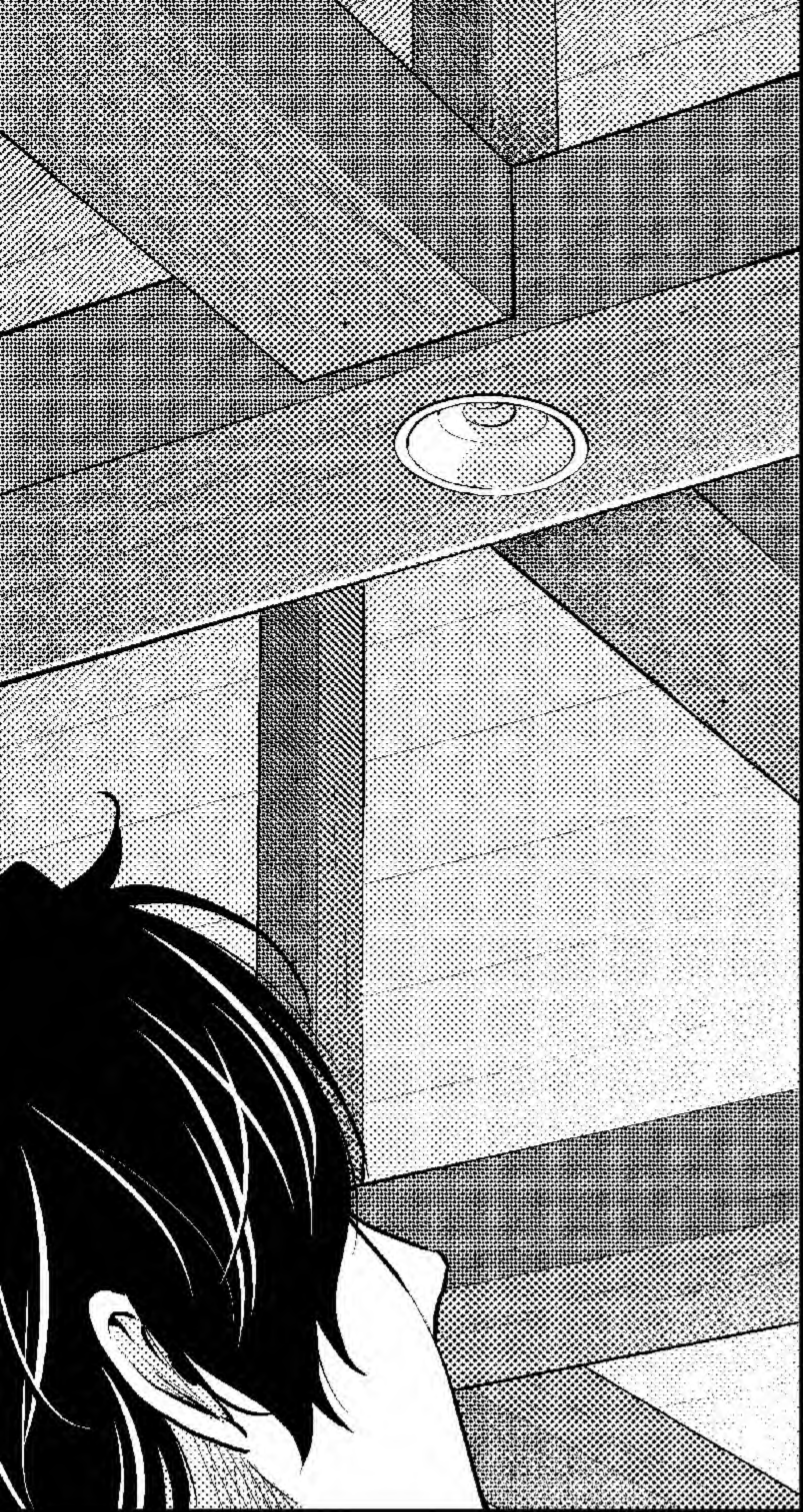








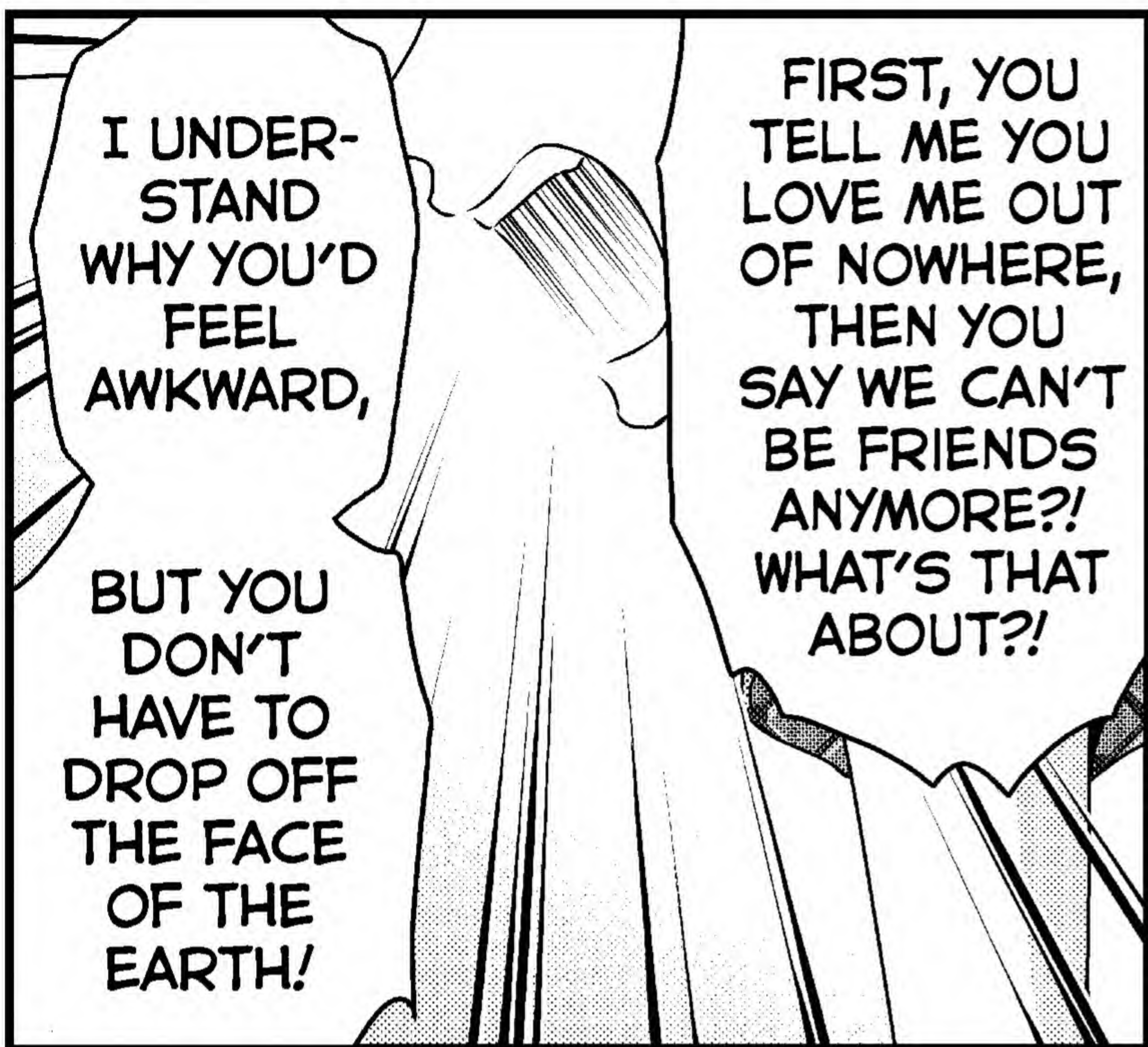








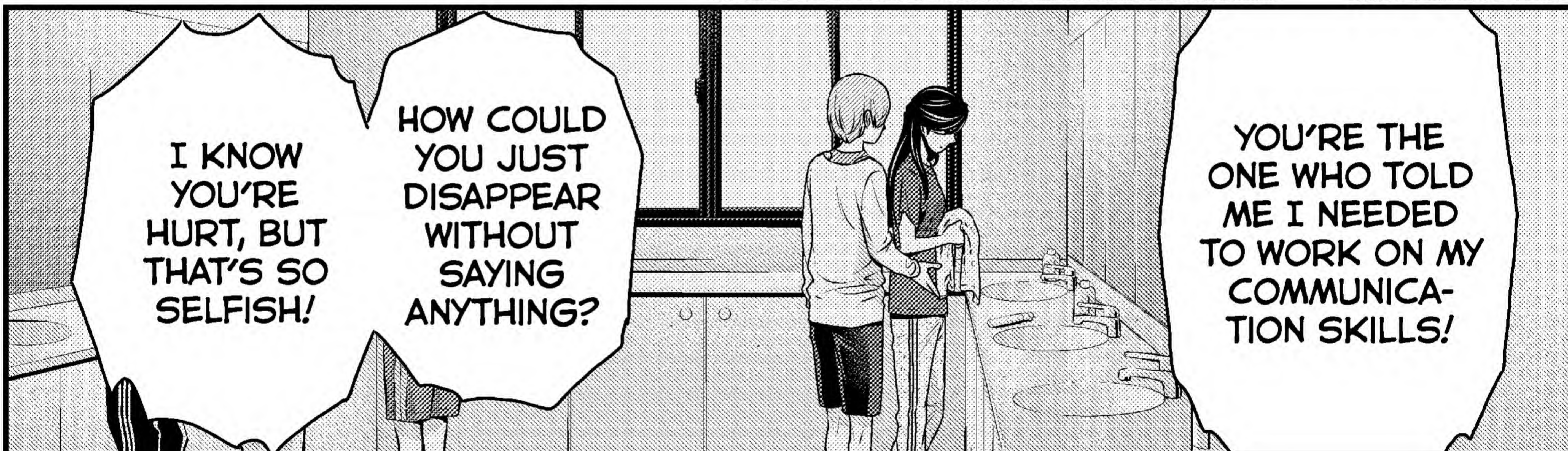
**HOW  
SELFISH  
CAN YOU  
BE?!**



I UNDER-  
STAND  
WHY YOU'D  
FEEL  
AWKWARD,

BUT YOU  
DON'T  
HAVE TO  
DROP OFF  
THE FACE  
OF THE  
EARTH!

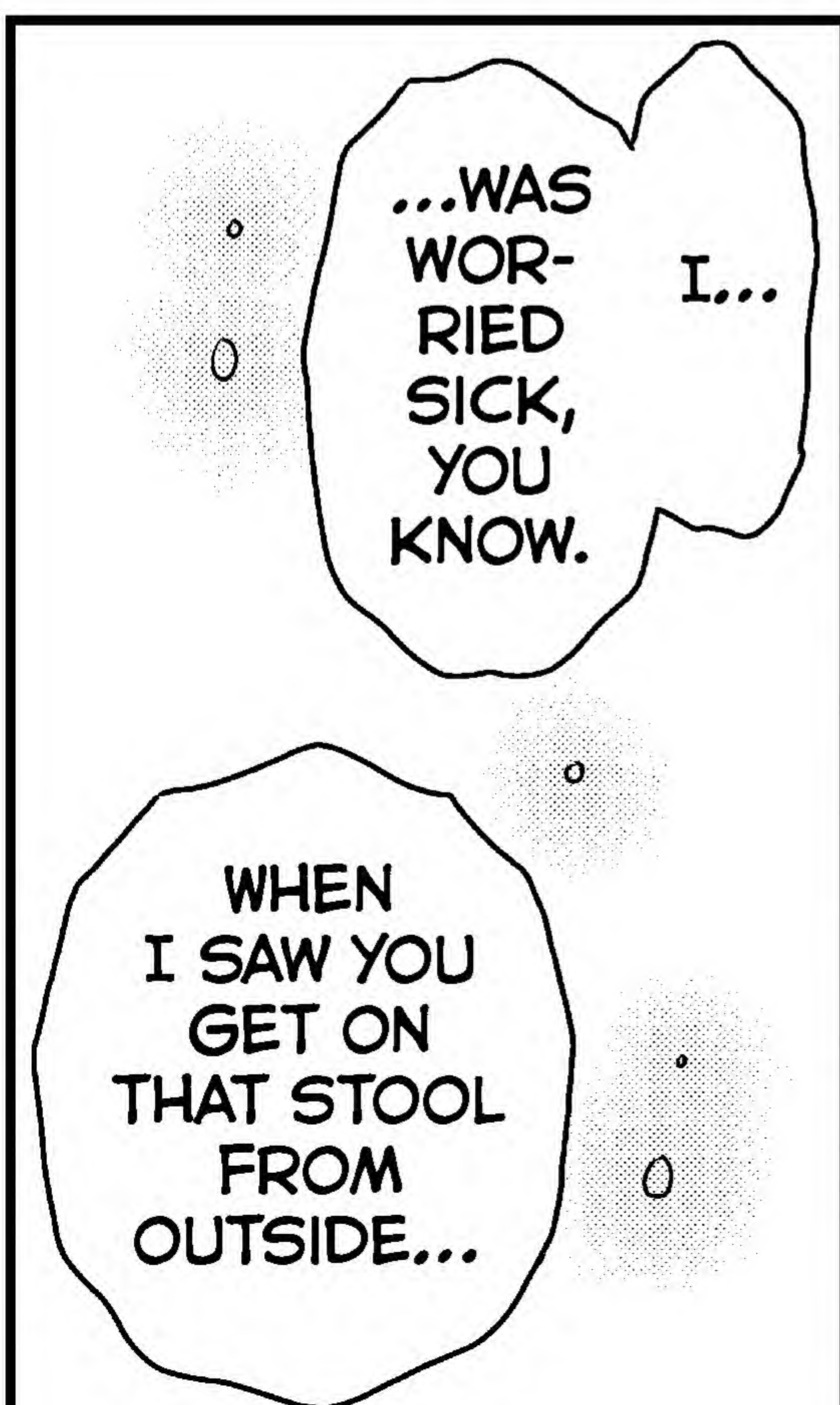
FIRST, YOU  
TELL ME YOU  
LOVE ME OUT  
OF NOWHERE,  
THEN YOU  
SAY WE CAN'T  
BE FRIENDS  
ANYMORE?!  
WHAT'S THAT  
ABOUT?!



I KNOW  
YOU'RE  
HURT, BUT  
THAT'S SO  
SELFISH!

HOW COULD  
YOU JUST  
DISAPPEAR  
WITHOUT  
SAYING  
ANYTHING?

YOU'RE THE  
ONE WHO TOLD  
ME I NEEDED  
TO WORK ON MY  
COMMUNICA-  
TION SKILLS!



...WAS  
WOR-  
RIED  
SICK,  
YOU  
KNOW.

I...

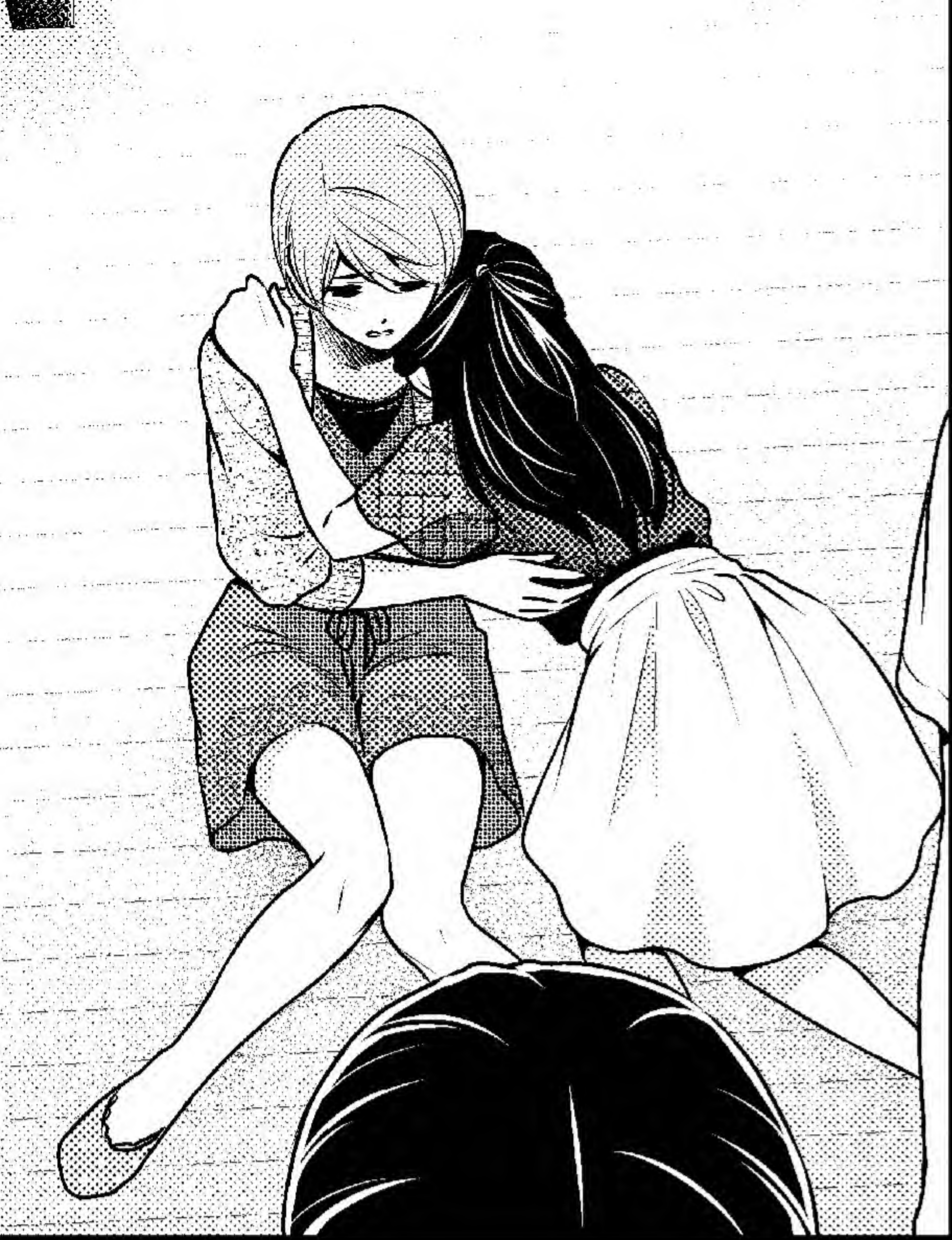
WHEN  
I SAW YOU  
GET ON  
THAT STOOL  
FROM  
OUTSIDE...



SORRY.

...







...MY  
BEST  
FRIEND.

HE  
WAS  
...



BUT WE WERE LIKE BROTHERS. WE COULD JUST RELAX AND BE OURSELVES AROUND EACH OTHER.

SURE, WE FOUGHT SOMETIMES,

WE'D BEEN TOGETHER EVER SINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

I LOVE YOU...

I DON'T MEAN AS FRIENDS, TAKUMI. I MEAN, LIKE, LOVE, Y'KNOW?

HUH?

BUT THEN,  
IN FALL OF OUR SENIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL...

I...

...ALWAYS HAVE.

I KNOW!

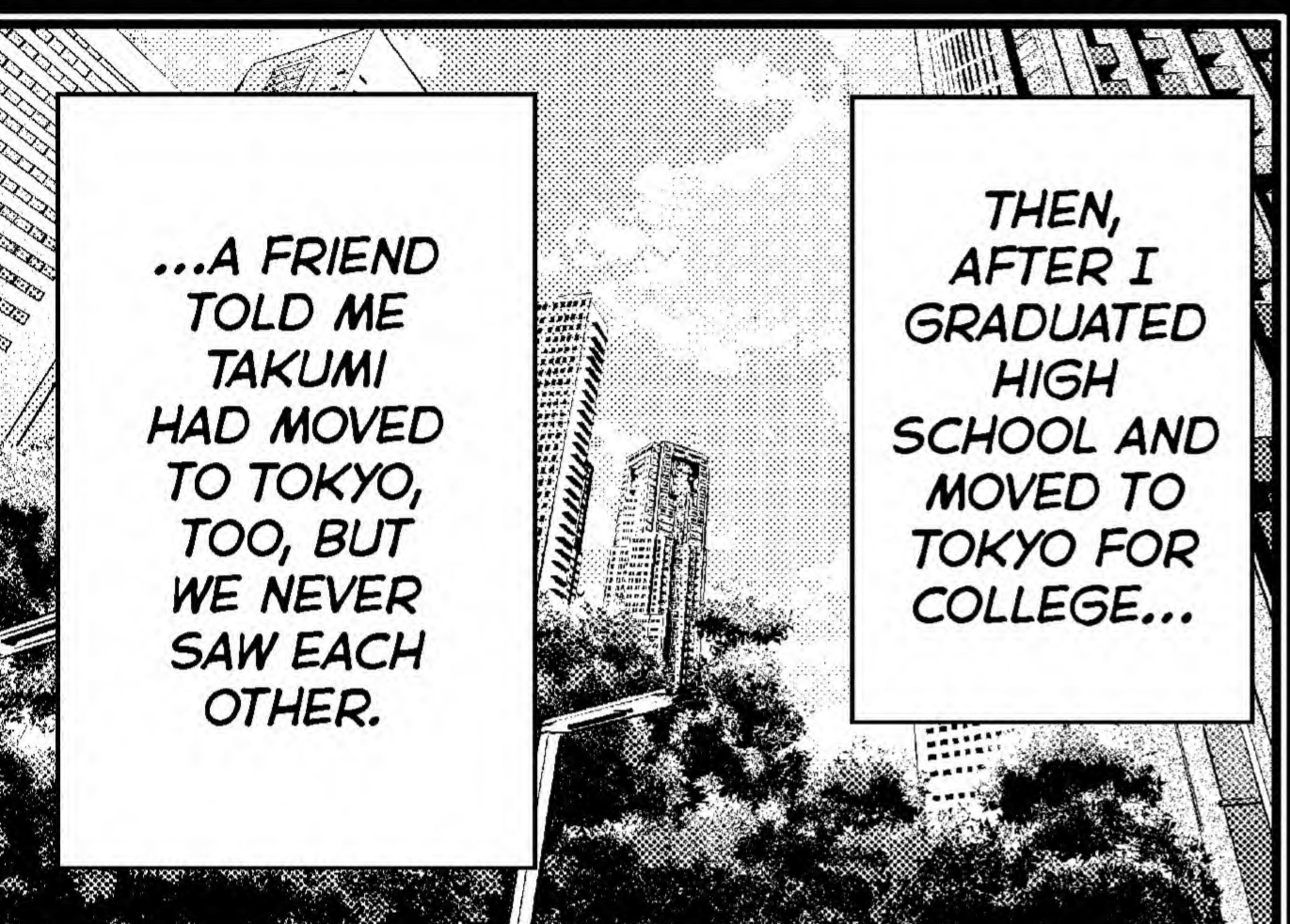
YOU'RE THE ONE I LIKE,  
YUJI.





...AND WE JUST KIND OF DRIFTED APART.

I STOPPED BEING ABLE TO SO MUCH AS LOOK HIM IN THE EYE...



...A FRIEND TOLD ME TAKUMI HAD MOVED TO TOKYO, TOO, BUT WE NEVER SAW EACH OTHER.

THEN, AFTER I GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL AND MOVED TO TOKYO FOR COLLEGE...

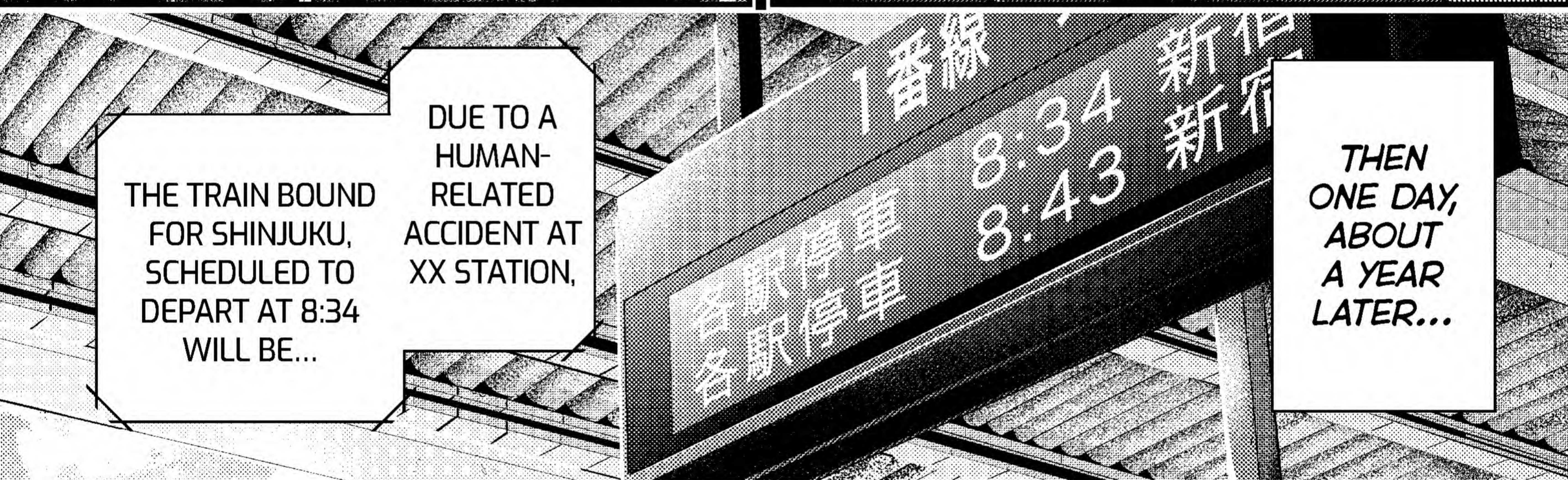


...OR HOW I SHOULD EVEN APPROACH HIM ANYMORE.

I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER ...

I WAS DUMB-FOUNDED.

I COULDN'T GET OVER THE IDEA THAT HE WANTED TO DO THE KINDA STUFF LOVERS DO WITH ME.



THE TRAIN BOUND FOR SHINJUKU, SCHEDULED TO DEPART AT 8:34 WILL BE...

DUE TO A HUMAN-RELATED ACCIDENT AT XX STATION,

THEN ONE DAY, ABOUT A YEAR LATER...



HUH ...?



WHOA... SERIOUSLY?

HEY, I'M GONNA BE LATE.

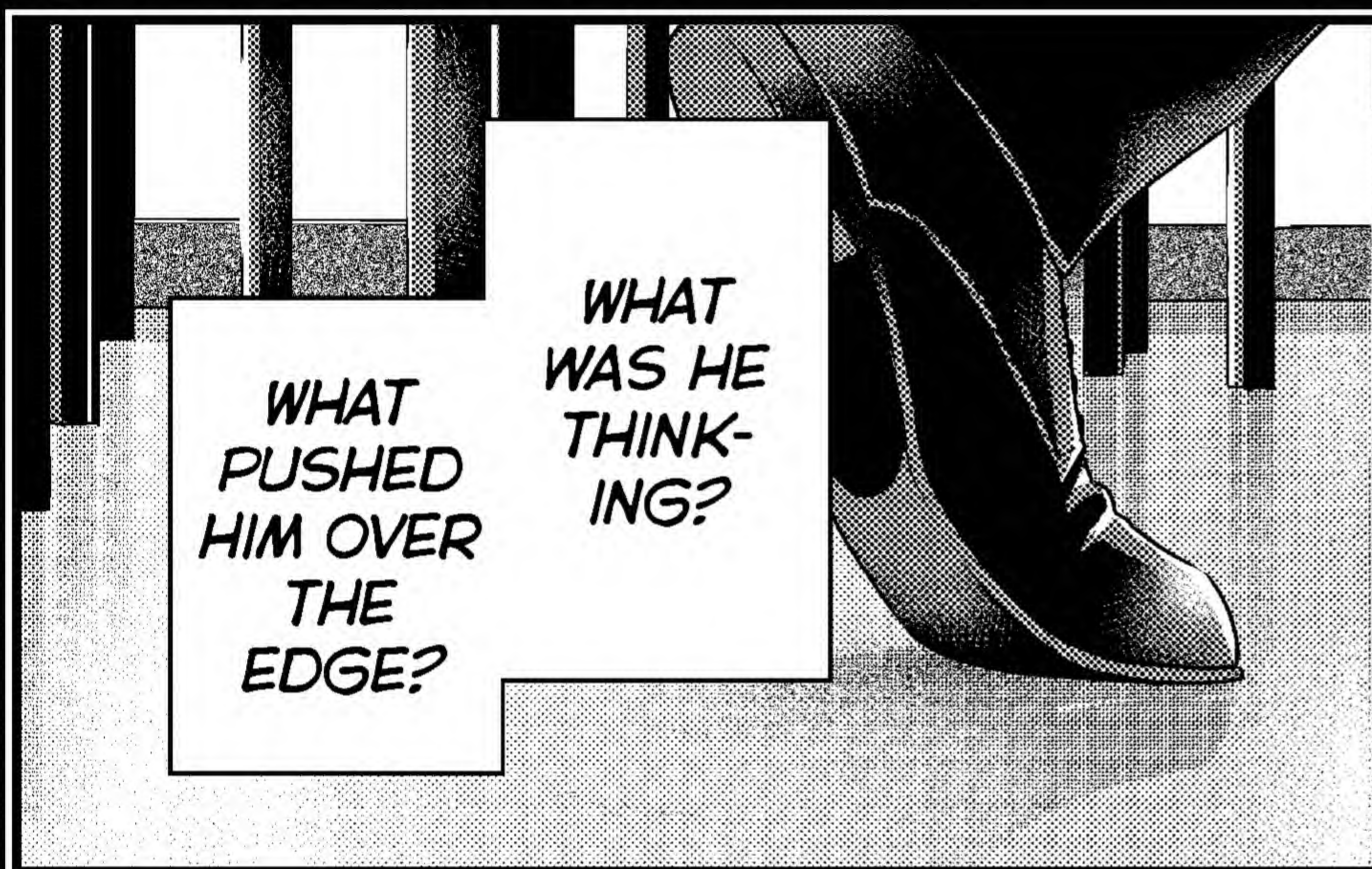
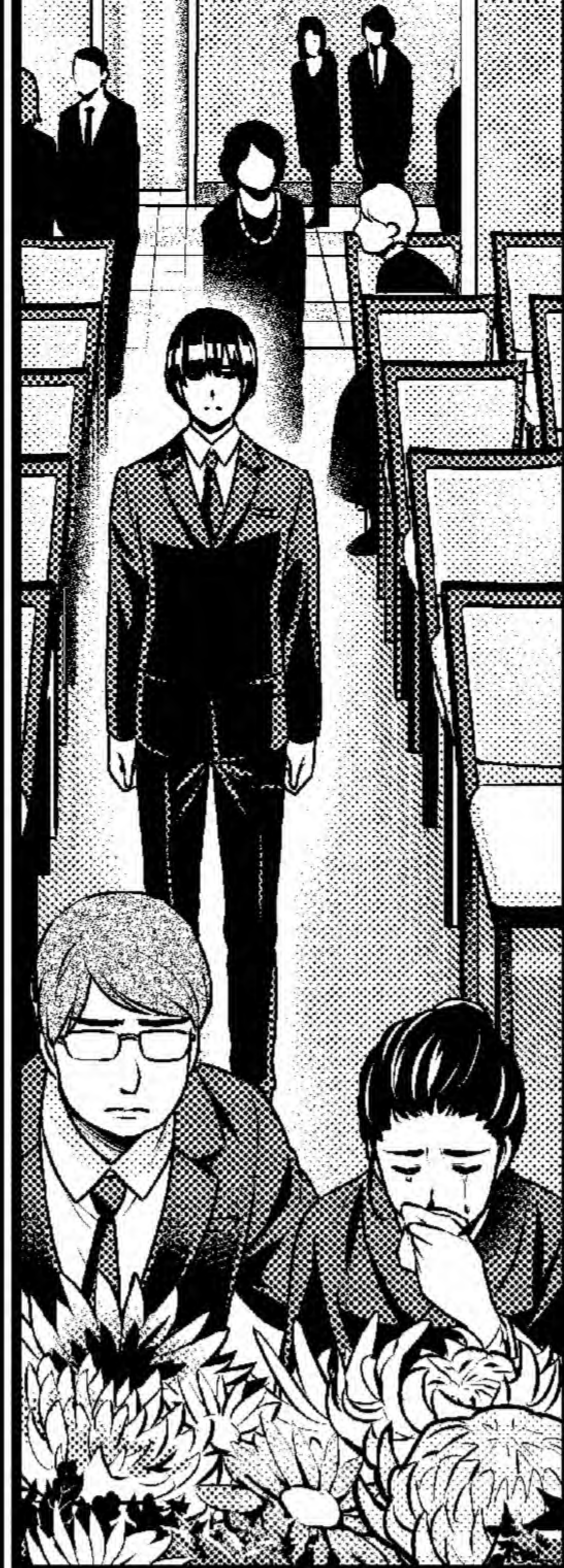
YEAH, SOMEONE JUMPED IN FRONT OF A TRAIN.





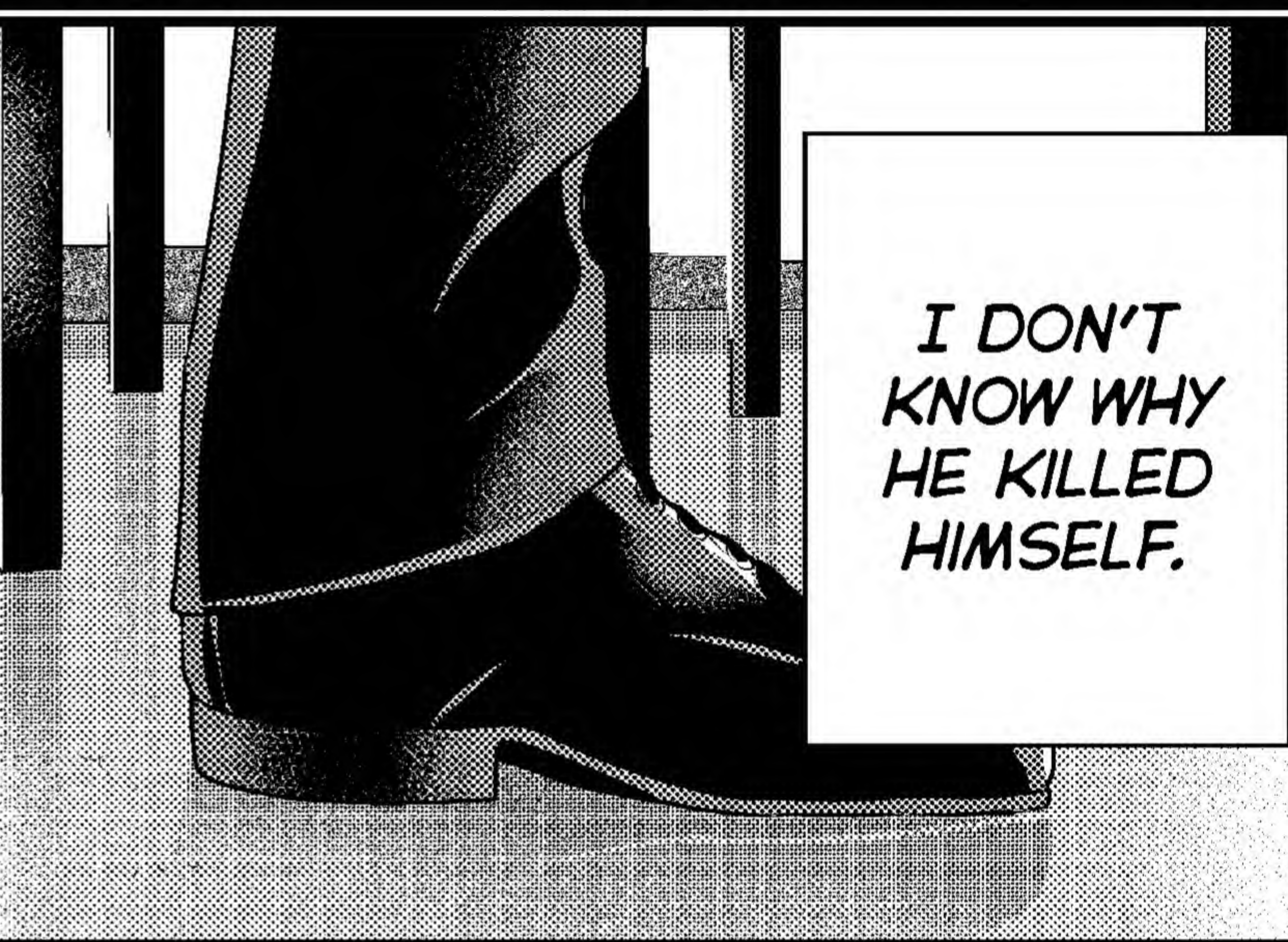
I WON-  
DER  
...

...WHAT I  
SHOULD'VE  
DONE DIF-  
FERENTLY.



WHAT  
PUSHED  
HIM OVER  
THE  
EDGE?

WHAT  
WAS HE  
THINK-  
ING?



I DON'T  
KNOW WHY  
HE KILLED  
HIMSELF.

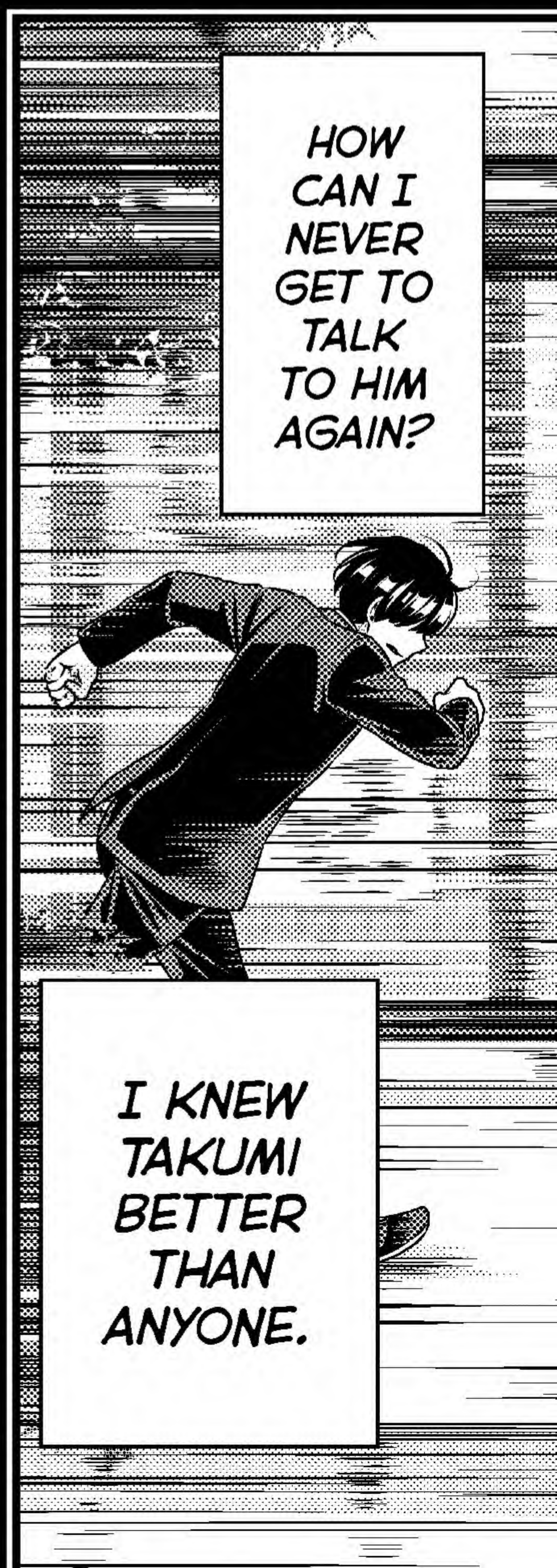


...WAS I  
SUPPOSED  
TO DO?!



WE WERE  
ALWAYS  
TOGETH-  
ER.

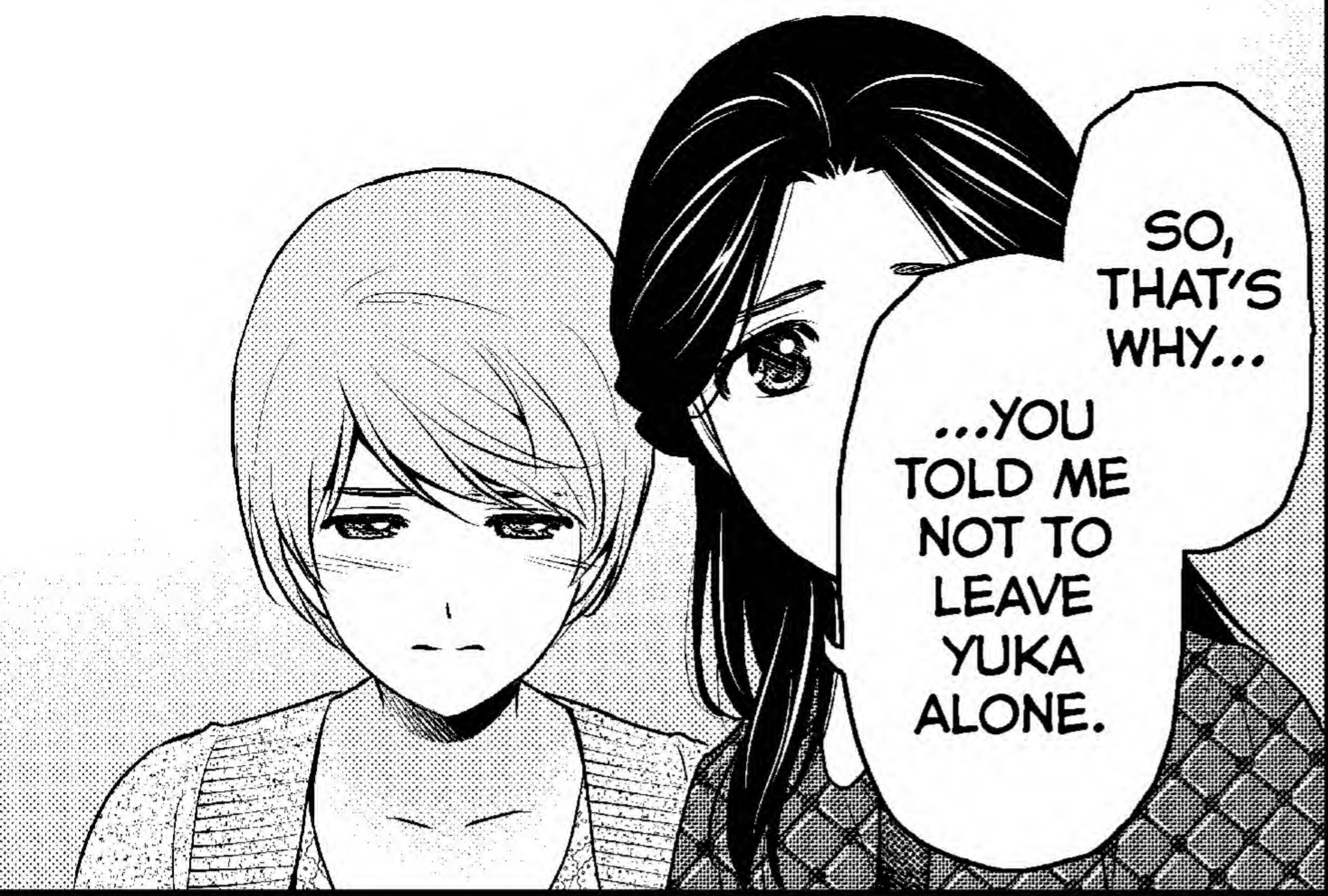
IT'S NOT  
LIKE I  
HATED HIM  
OR ANY-  
THING!



HOW  
CAN I  
NEVER  
GET TO  
TALK  
TO HIM  
AGAIN?

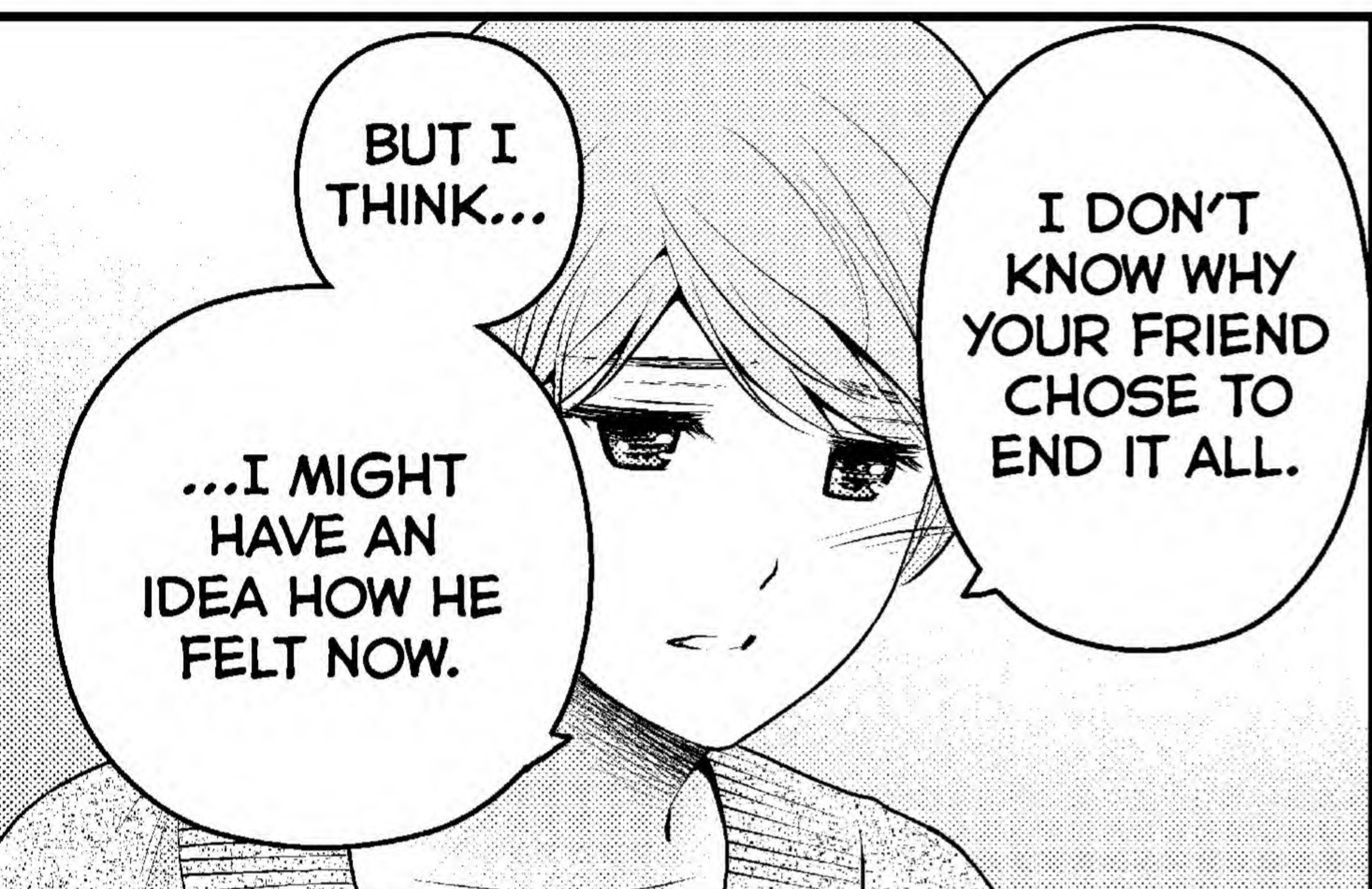
I KNEW  
TAKUMI  
BETTER  
THAN  
ANYONE.





SO,  
THAT'S  
WHY...

...YOU  
TOLD ME  
NOT TO  
LEAVE  
YUKA  
ALONE.



BUT I  
THINK...

...I MIGHT  
HAVE AN  
IDEA HOW HE  
FELT NOW.

I DON'T  
KNOW WHY  
YOUR FRIEND  
CHOSE TO  
END IT ALL.



I'M STILL  
TRYING TO  
COME UP  
WITH AN  
ANSWER.



THAT'S  
WHY I  
CHOSE  
TO WALK  
AWAY.

AT  
LEAST,  
THAT'S  
HOW I  
FELT.



DO YOU  
REALLY  
THINK IT'S  
IMPOSSI-  
BLE...

...TO BE  
TOGETHER  
DESPITE  
ALL THAT?



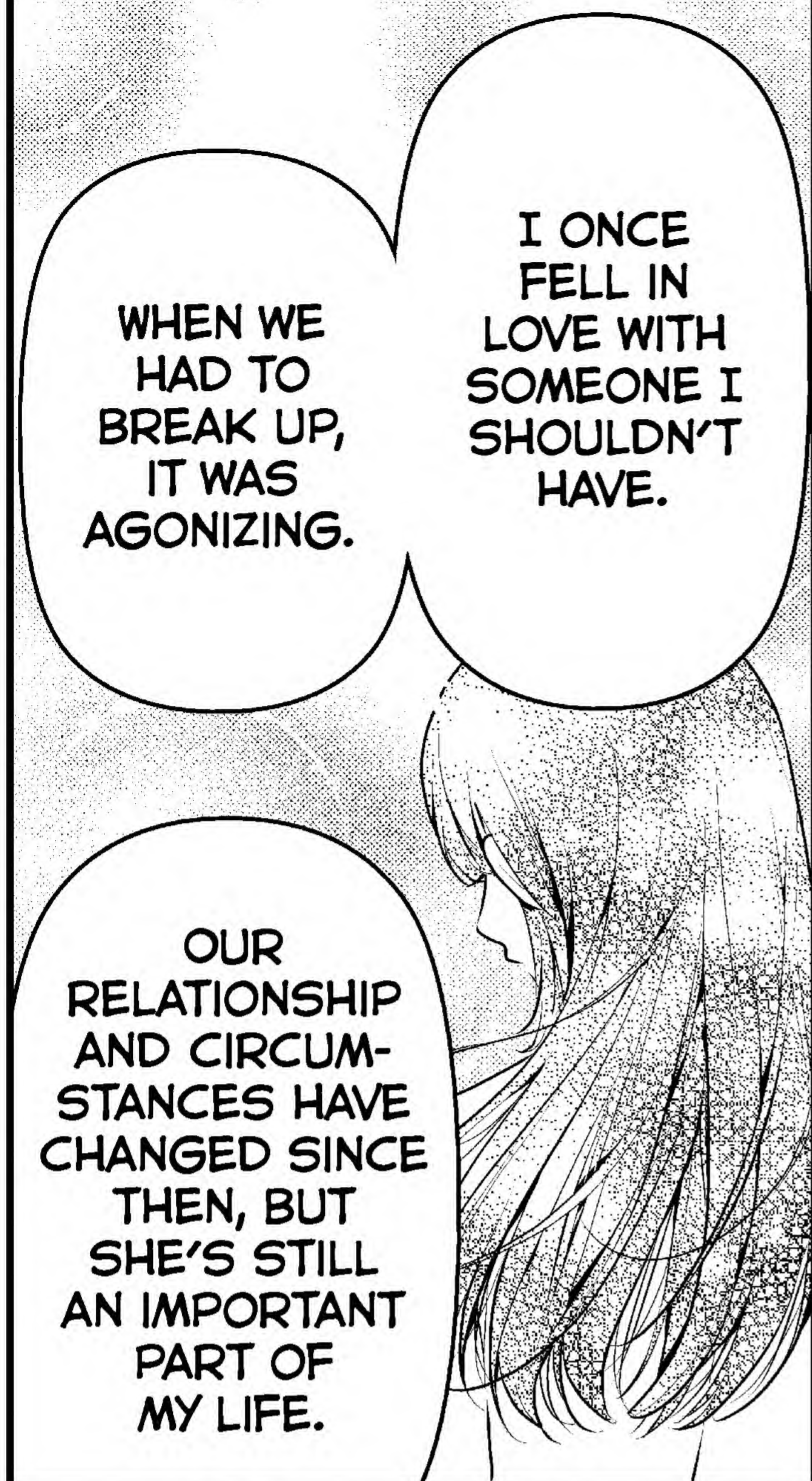
...BUT  
BECAUSE  
HE THOUGHT  
HE HURT  
THE ONE  
HE LOVED.



...WASN'T  
THAT HIS  
FEELINGS  
WEREN'T  
RETURNED  
...

I BET  
WHAT WAS  
PAINFUL  
FOR HIM  
...

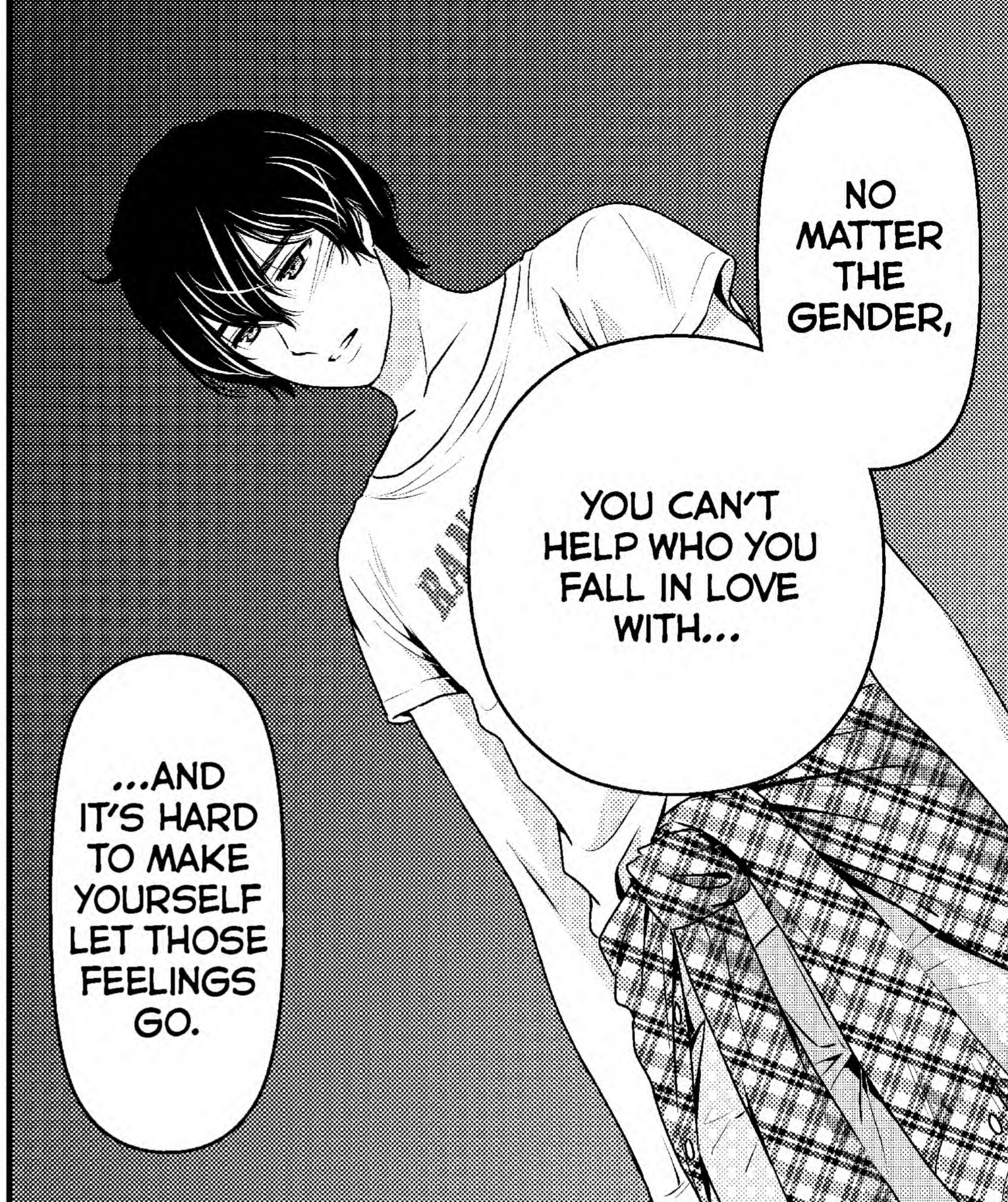




WHEN WE  
HAD TO  
BREAK UP,  
IT WAS  
AGONIZING.

I ONCE  
FELL IN  
LOVE WITH  
SOMEONE I  
SHOULDN'T  
HAVE.

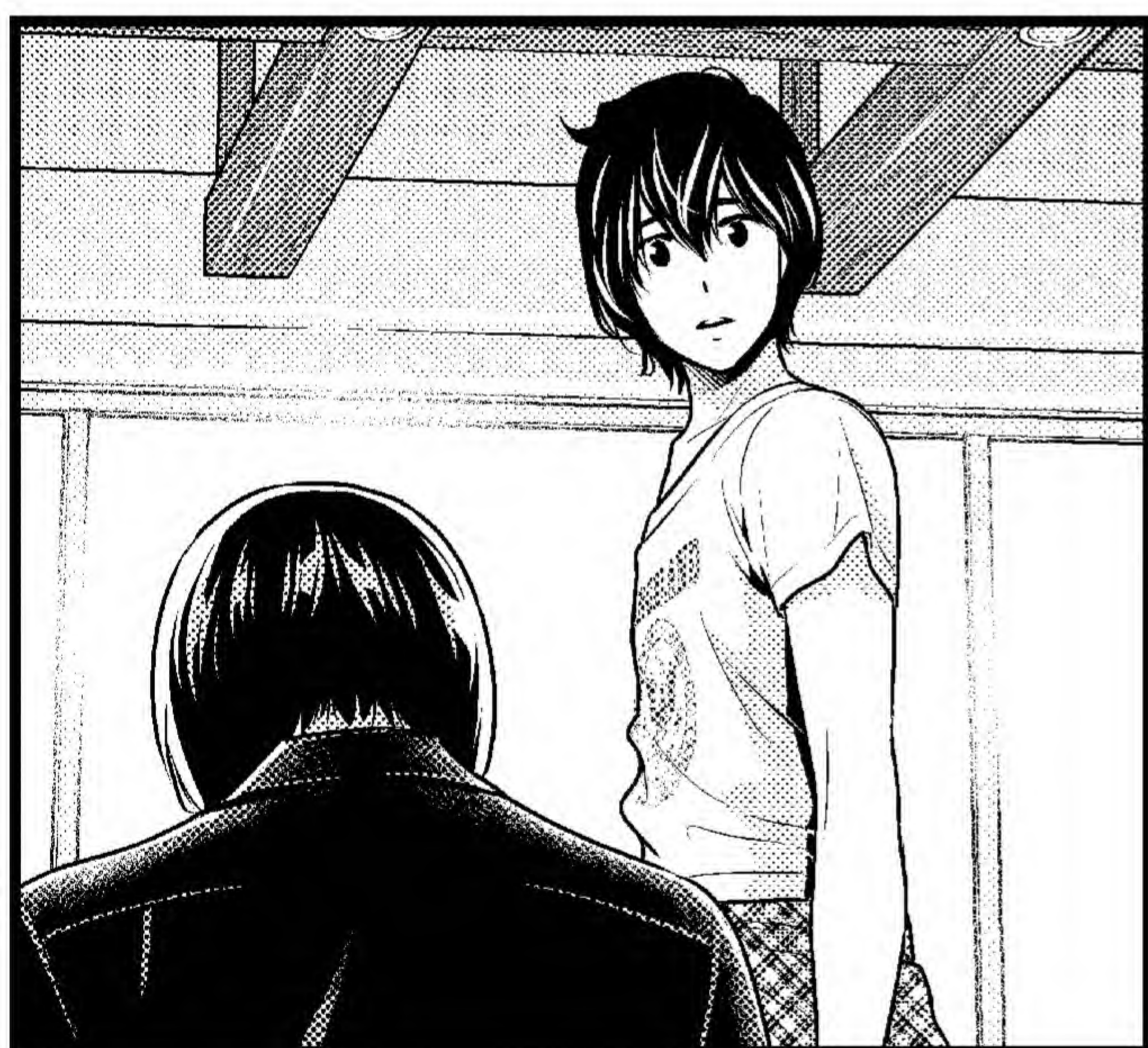
OUR  
RELATIONSHIP  
AND CIRCUM-  
STANCES HAVE  
CHANGED SINCE  
THEN, BUT  
SHE'S STILL  
AN IMPORTANT  
PART OF  
MY LIFE.



NO  
MATTER  
THE  
GENDER,

YOU CAN'T  
HELP WHO YOU  
FALL IN LOVE  
WITH...

...AND  
IT'S HARD  
TO MAKE  
YOURSELF  
LET THOSE  
FEELINGS  
GO.



I KNOW WHAT  
IT'S LIKE TO  
ASK YOURSELF  
IF THERE WAS  
ANYTHING YOU  
COULD'VE DONE,  
HIYAMA-SEMPAI.  
BELIEVE ME.

BUT  
...



SO,  
EVEN IF  
THERE  
ARE ALL  
SORTS OF  
COMPLICATED  
FEELINGS  
BETWEEN  
TWO  
PEOPLE,

LIKE  
LOVE,  
REGRET,  
AND  
EMBAR-  
RASS-  
MENT...

...I DON'T  
THINK THAT  
MEANS YOU  
HAVE TO  
FADE OUT  
OF EACH  
OTHER'S  
LIVES.



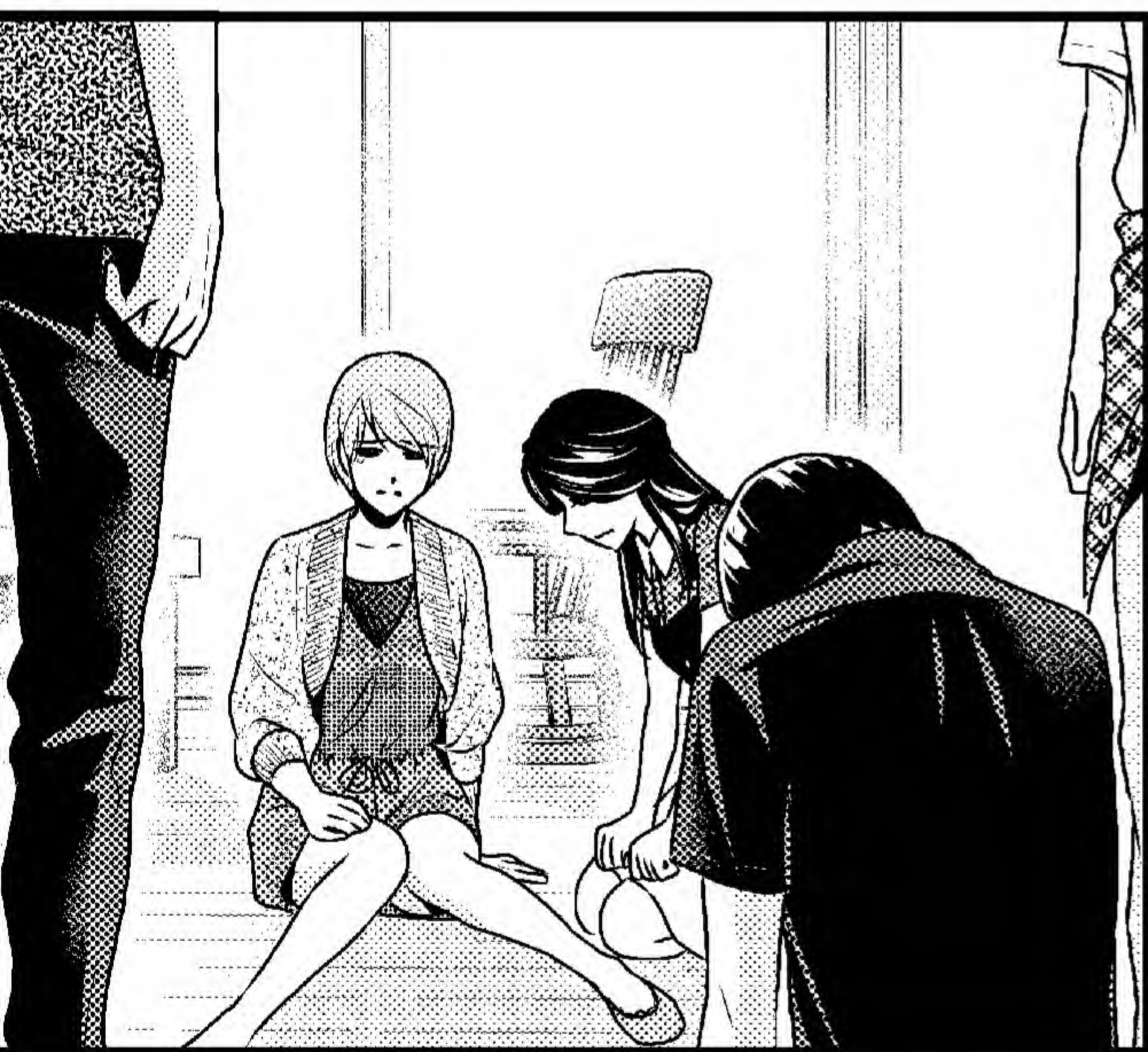


...MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY AND CHERISH THE TIME YOU SPENT TOGETHER?

...THEN INSTEAD OF BEATING YOURSELF UP OVER HIS DEATH ...

...IF YOUR FRIEND'S FEELINGS WERE ANYTHING LIKE WHAT KUSANAGI-SAN DESCRIBED ...

MAGAZINE: POPULAR WINTER STYLES



YEAH ...

YUJI!

YOU'RE RIGHT.





HEY!

EVEN IF IT  
DOESN'T  
GO MY  
WAY...

...I'M  
GONNA  
KEEP  
LIKING THE  
PERSON  
I LIKE...

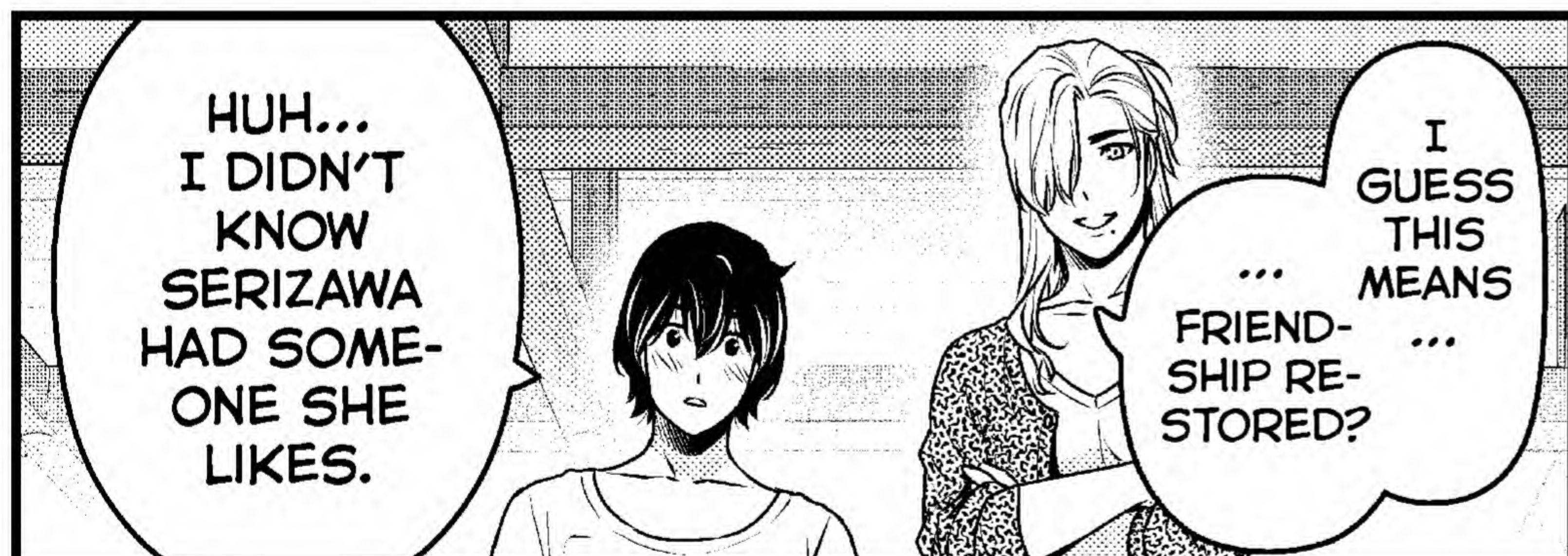
...AND  
GIVE IT  
MY BEST  
SHOT,  
ANYWAY!

WHAT  
ABOUT  
YOU,  
YUKA  
?



...IF I  
GIVE IT  
MY BEST  
SHOT,  
TOO?

IS IT  
OKAY  
...



HUH...  
I DIDN'T  
KNOW  
SERIZAWA  
HAD SOME-  
ONE SHE  
LIKES.

I  
GUESS  
THIS  
MEANS  
...  
FRIEND-  
SHIP RE-  
STORED?



I  
COULD  
SEE IT  
IN HER  
EYES  
DURING  
PRAC-  
TICE.

I FIG-  
URED  
IT OUT,  
TOO.

HUH?!  
YOU  
KNEW,  
SEMPAI  
?!

AND  
LEAVE  
THIS  
BONE-  
HEAD.

WELL,  
LET'S  
GO  
HOME.

YOU'RE  
KID-  
DING!



THAT'S  
FINE.

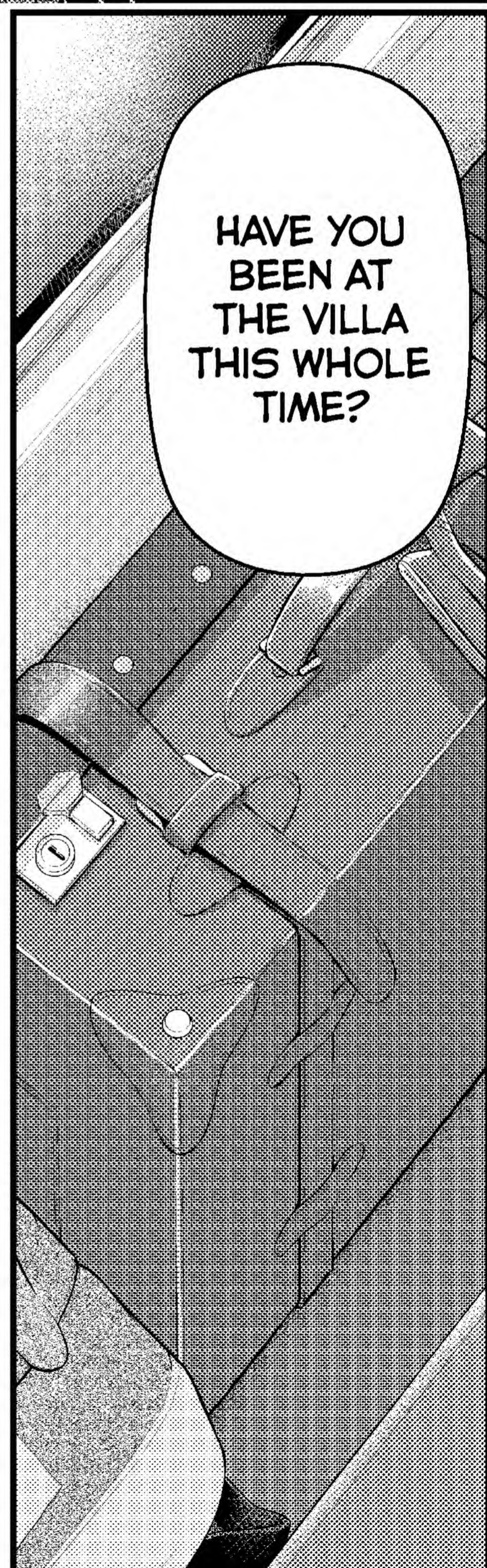


HEE,  
HEE  
...

DON'T  
EXPECT ME  
TO ROOT  
FOR YOU,  
OKAY?



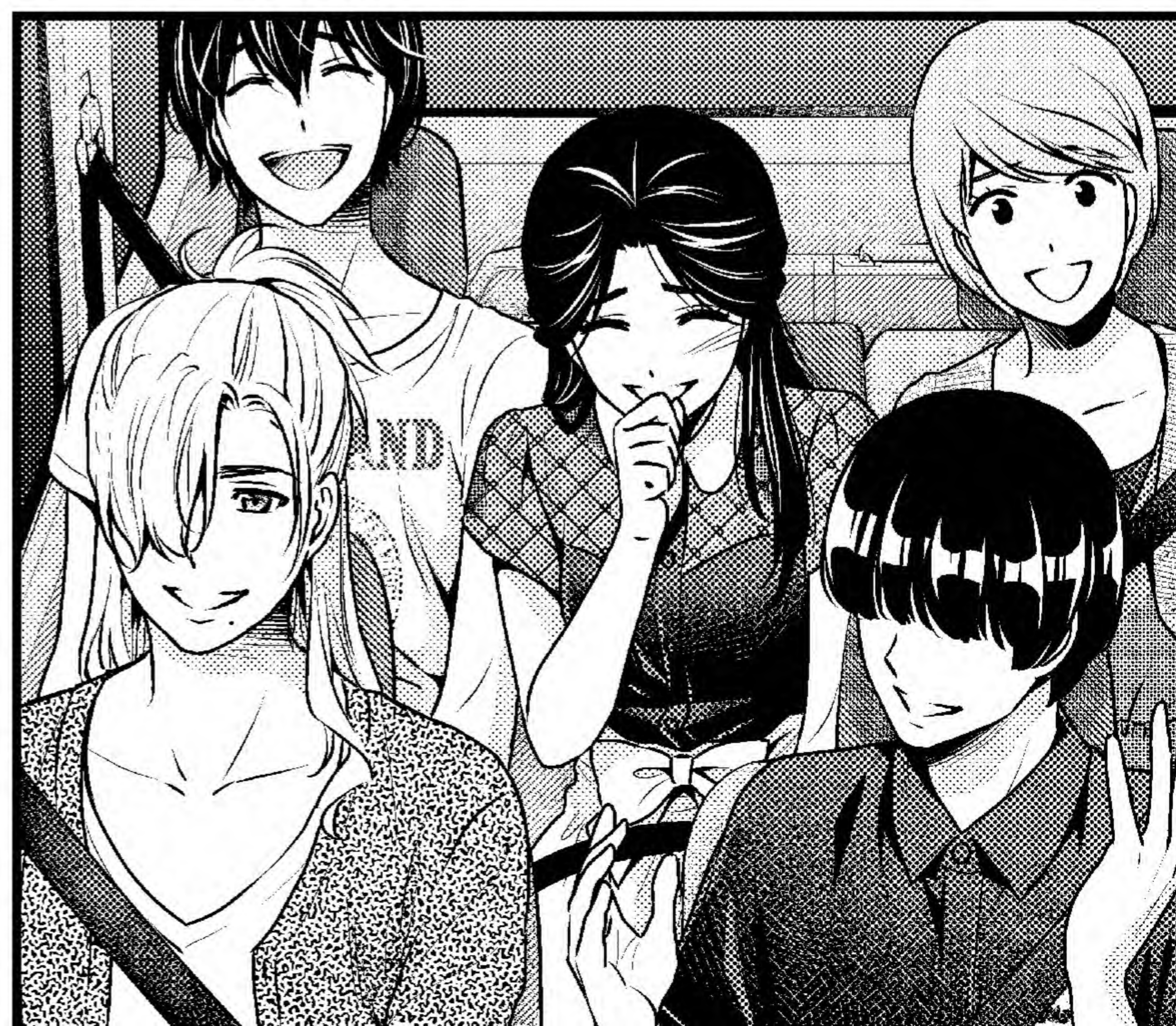
# CHAPTER 168: IRREGULARITY DETECTED IN A LOVE STRUCK GIRL









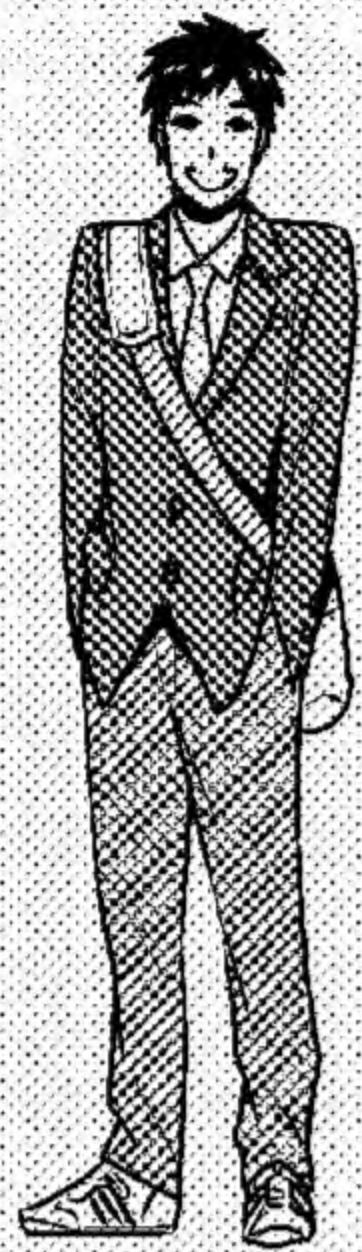




WHO WAS  
ONCE  
HERE  
ON THIS  
EARTH.

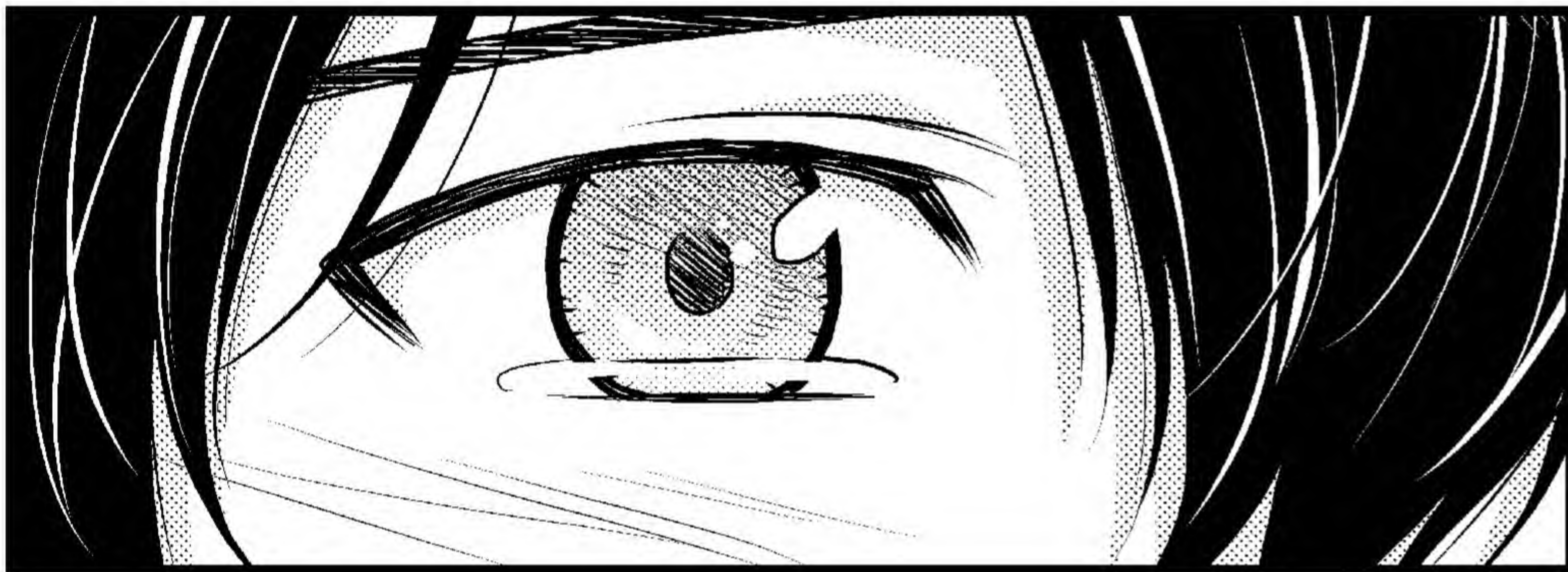
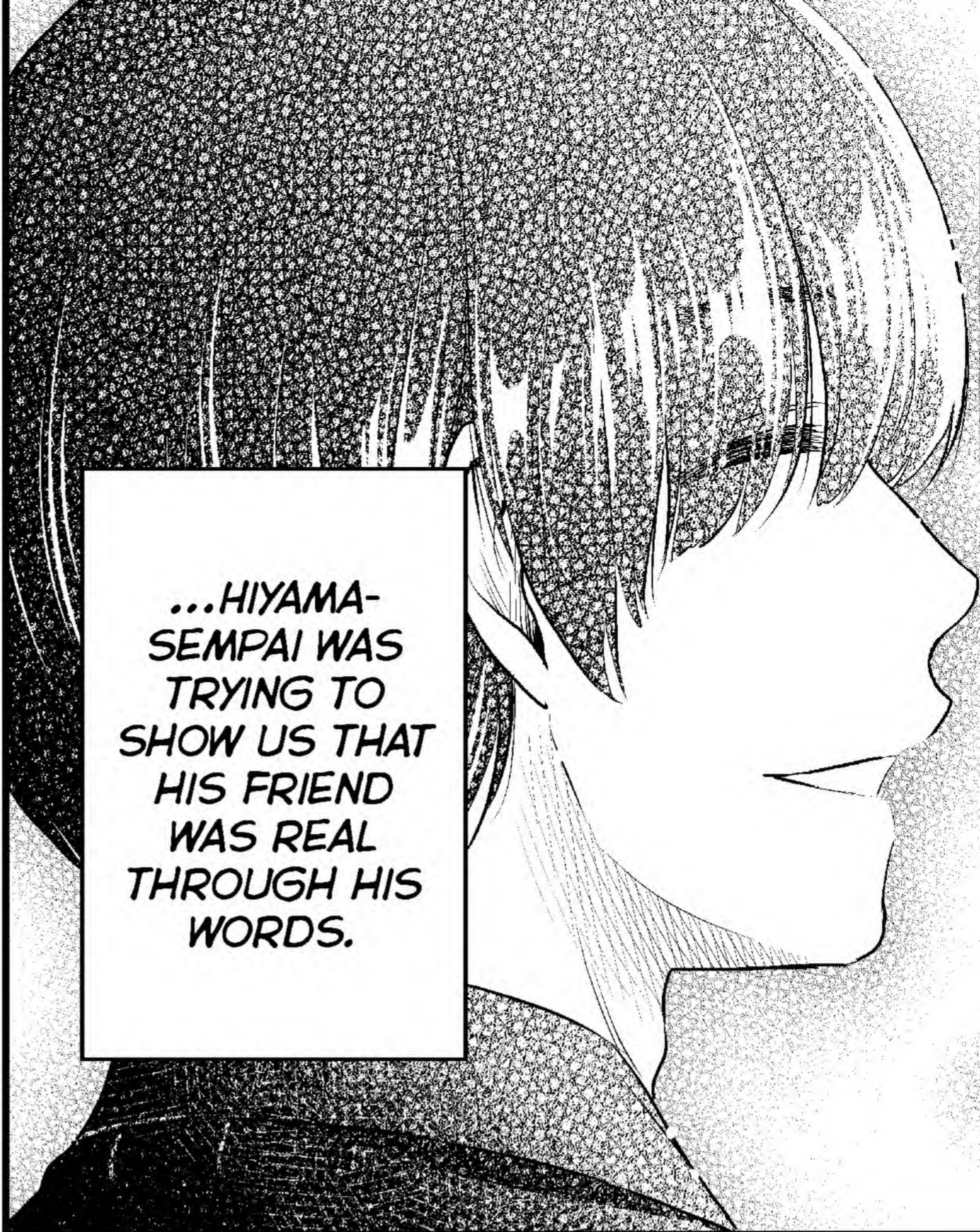
TO SHOW  
THAT  
HE HAD  
A BEST  
FRIEND,  
TAKUMI,

AND  
EVEN  
THOUGH  
HE'S NO  
LONGER  
WITH US  
...



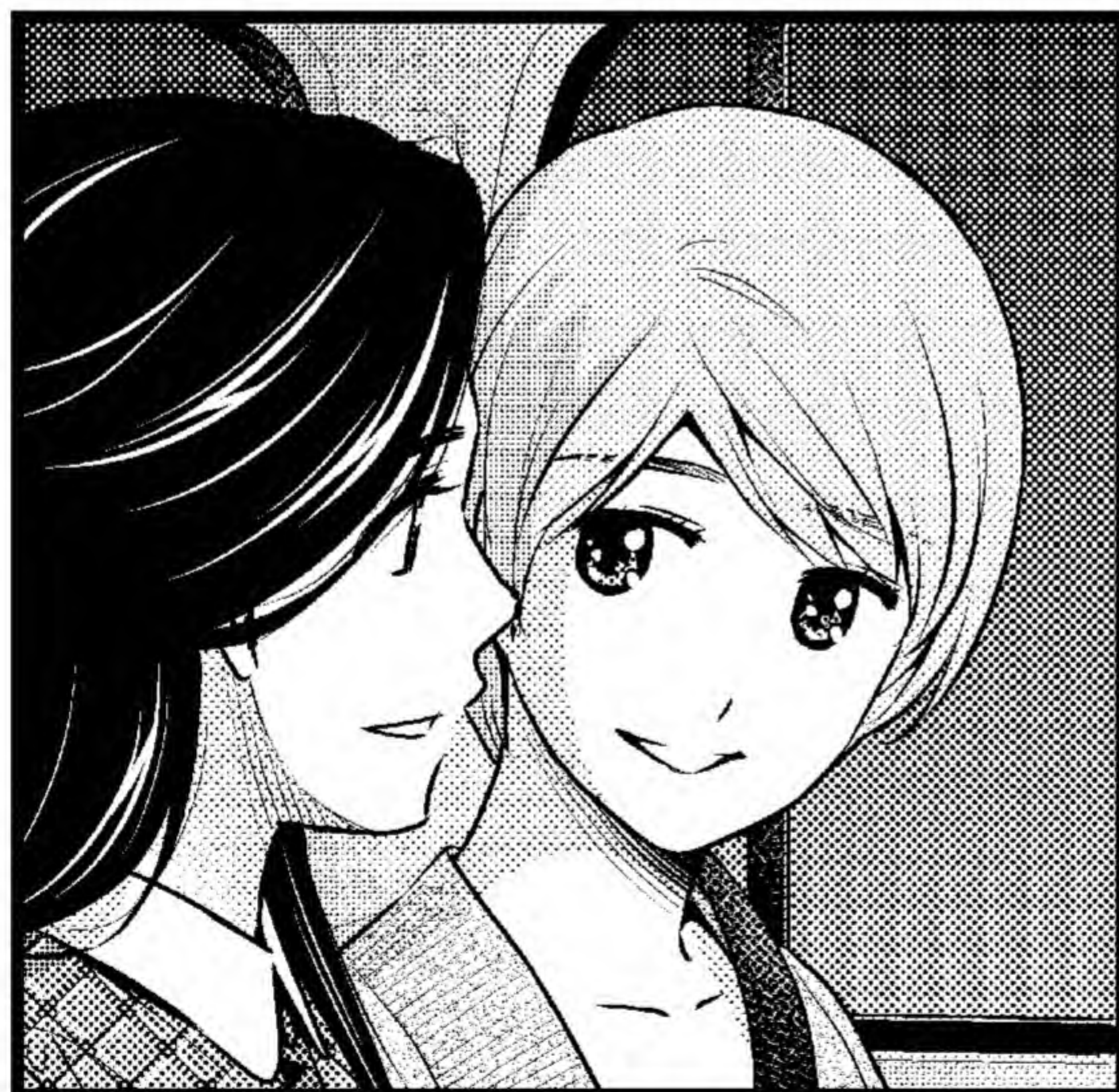
...HIYAMA-  
SEMPAI WAS  
TRYING TO  
SHOW US THAT  
HIS FRIEND  
WAS REAL  
THROUGH HIS  
WORDS.

IT WAS  
ALMOST  
AS IF...



...HE  
STILL  
LIVES  
ON...

...IN  
HIYAMA-  
SEMPAI'S  
HEART.



...IS  
JUST SO  
COMPLI-  
CATED.

MAN...

THE  
HUMAN  
HEART  
...

SO  
UNYIELD-  
ING.

SO FRUS-  
TRATING.





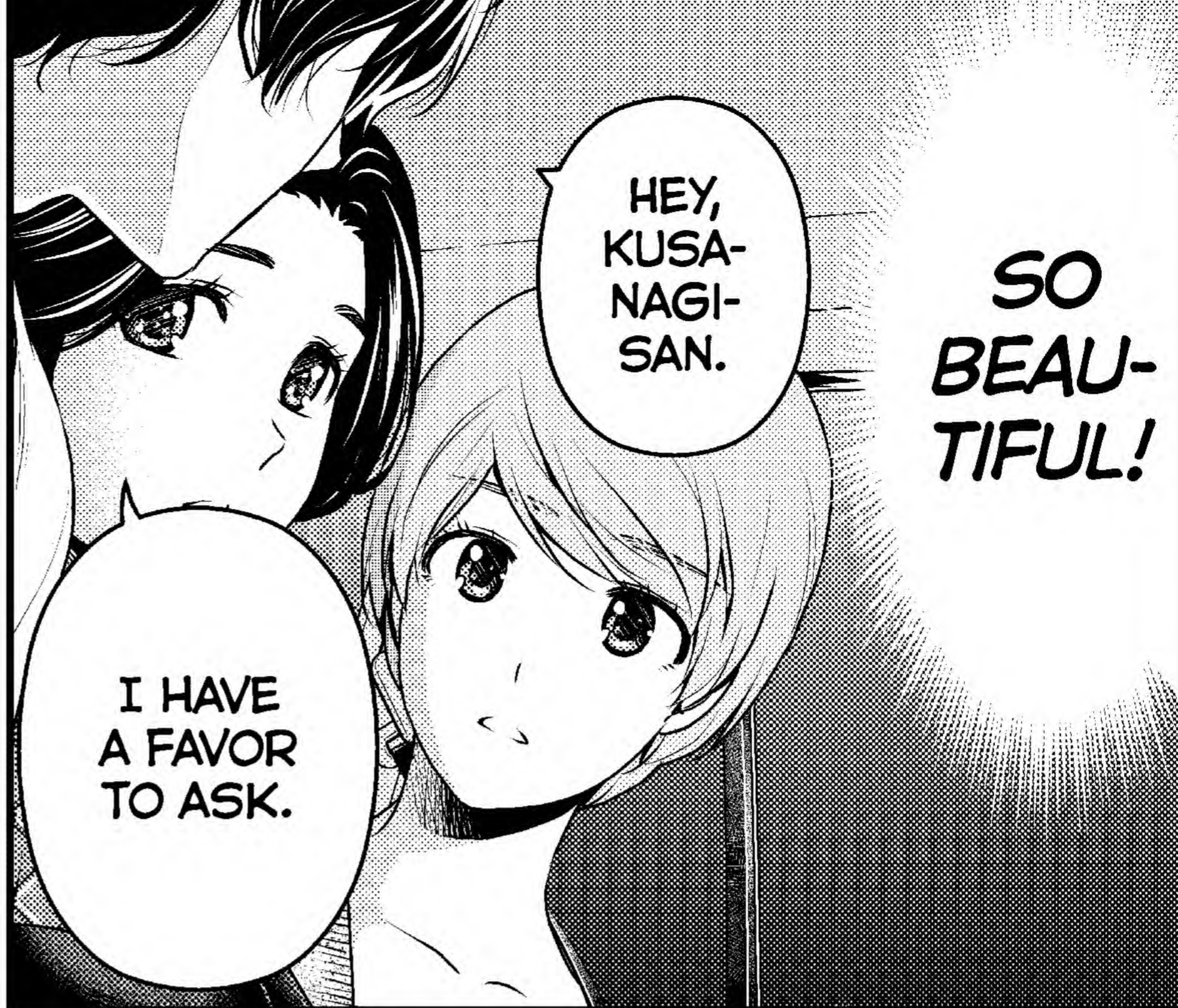
BUT  
WHAT I  
WANT TO  
CONVEY  
WITH MY  
WRITING  
...

WHAT I  
WANT  
TO GET  
TO THE  
BOTTOM  
OF...



I WAS  
SO  
CAUGHT  
UP IN  
WHAT  
MIGHT  
SELL  
THAT  
I LOST  
SIGHT  
OF IT.

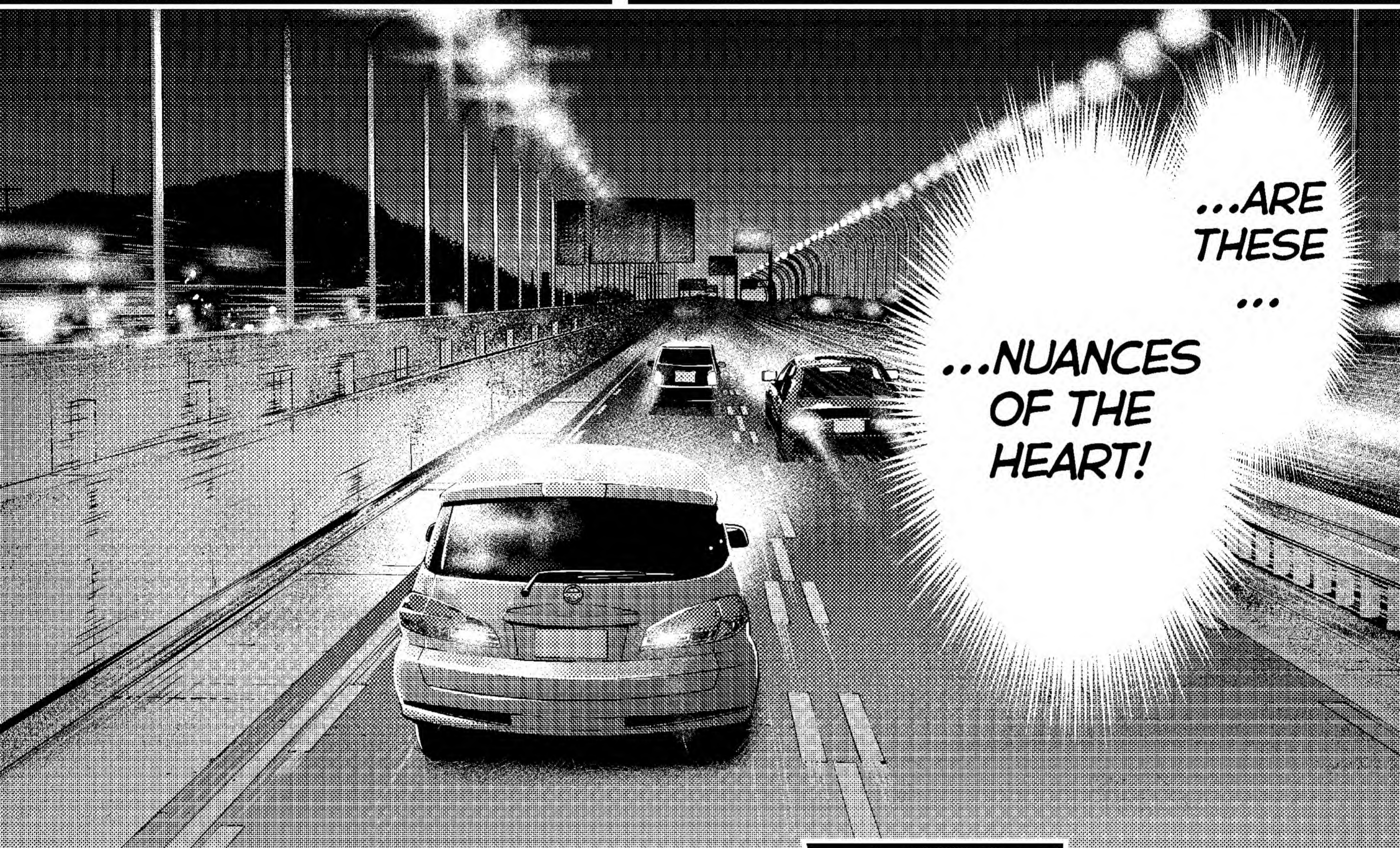
IT'S NOT  
AS IF SALES  
DON'T  
MATTER...



HEY,  
KUSA-  
NAGI-  
SAN.

SO  
BEAU-  
TIFUL!

I HAVE  
A FAVOR  
TO ASK.



...ARE  
THESE  
...

...NUANCES  
OF THE  
HEART!



KNOCK  
KNOCK



FLAP







OH,  
I SEE.

SOUNDS  
ROUGH.

I HAD TO  
TAKE A TRIP  
OUT OF  
TOWN TO  
DEAL WITH  
SOME CLUB  
TROUBLE.



THEN DO  
YOU THINK  
YOU CAN  
LEAVE THIS  
WEEKEND  
OPEN?

NAH,  
NOT  
REALLY.

ARE  
YOU  
BUSY  
WITH  
CLUB  
RIGHT  
NOW?

UHH...  
YEAH,  
SURE.  
WHAT'S  
UP?



SURE  
THING.

OH,  
RIGHT.



WE CAN  
MAKE  
PLANS TO  
MEET UP  
SOME-  
WHERE.

WOULD  
SATURDAY  
WORK  
BETTER?



WEL-  
COME  
BACK.

YOU'RE  
SURE  
HOME  
LATE.

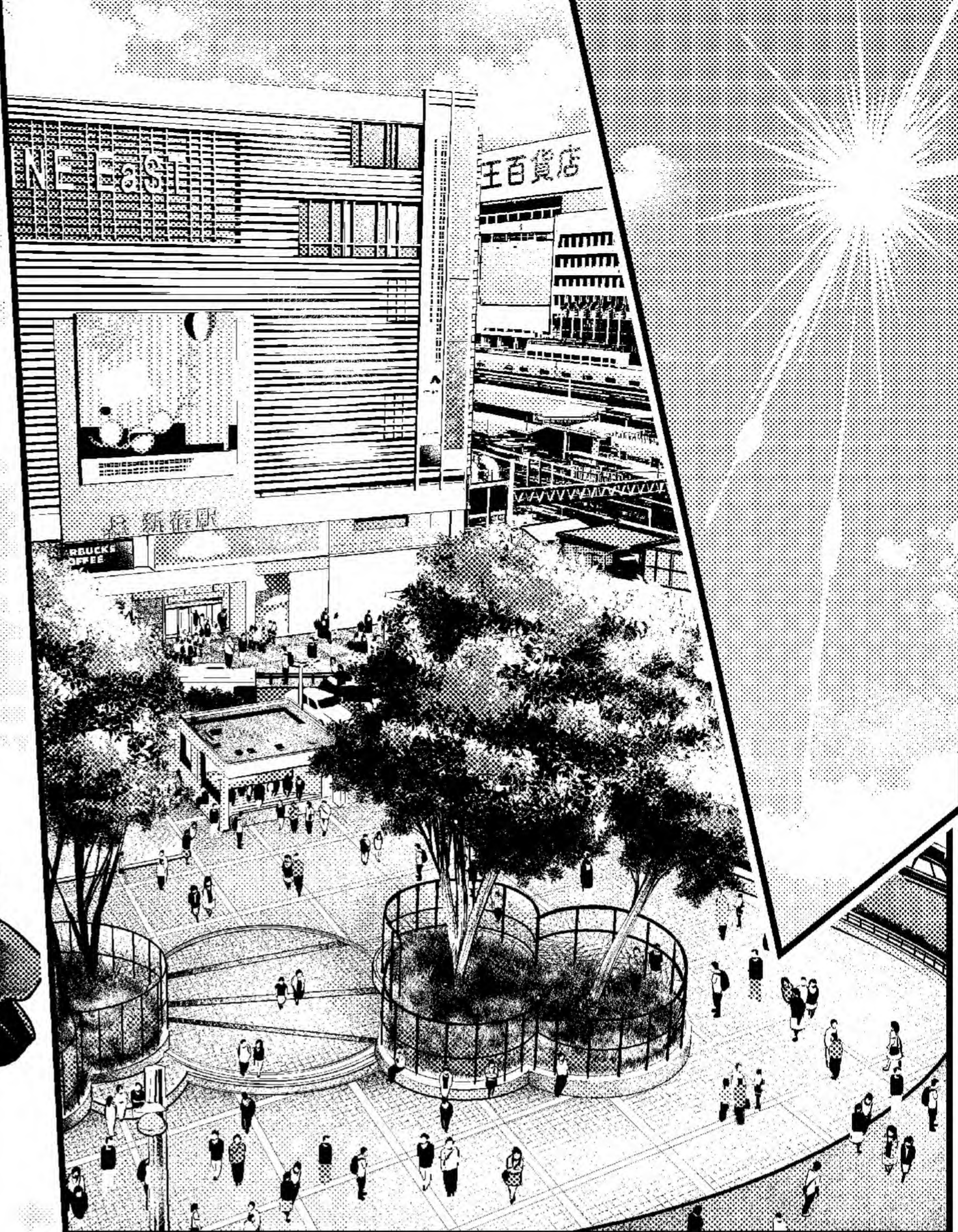
RUI!



I WAS  
THINKING  
WE COULD  
HAVE...

...OUR  
MONTHLY  
DATE.

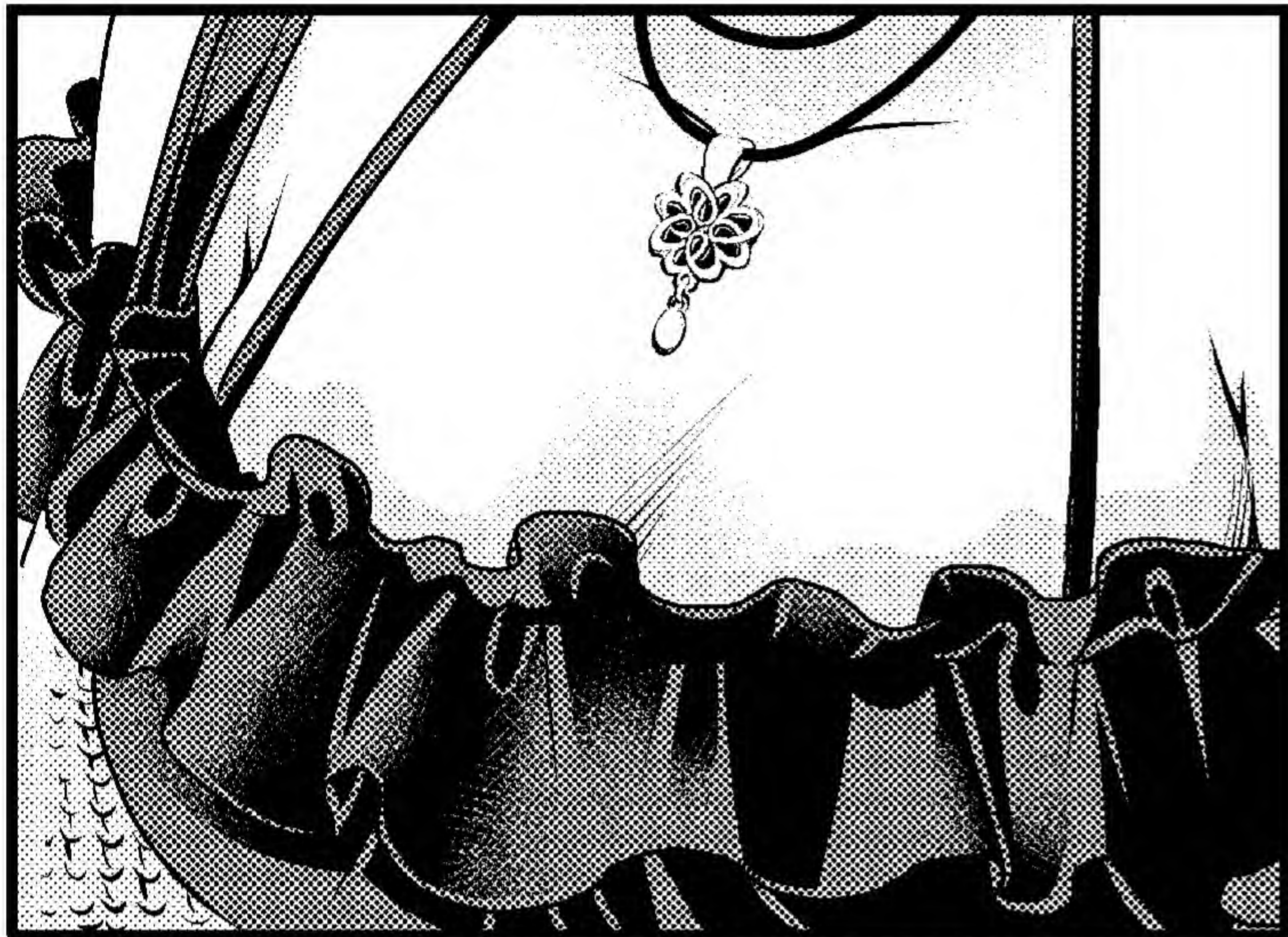




...BUT I THOUGHT UP A FUN DATE PLAN THAT SHOULDN'T BE TOO SPENDY.







UH...

RUI  
SEEMS  
...



IT'S  
HOT  
TODAY.  
YOU  
COULD'VE  
WAITED  
IN THE  
SHADE.

I WANTED  
TO BE EASY  
TO SPOT.



...I  
KINDS  
FEEL  
LIKE...

...HANG-  
ING OUT  
AT YOUR  
PLACE  
TODAY.



WELL,  
SHALL  
WE?

...KINDA  
DIFFERENT  
TODAY.

WHERE  
ARE WE  
GOING  
?

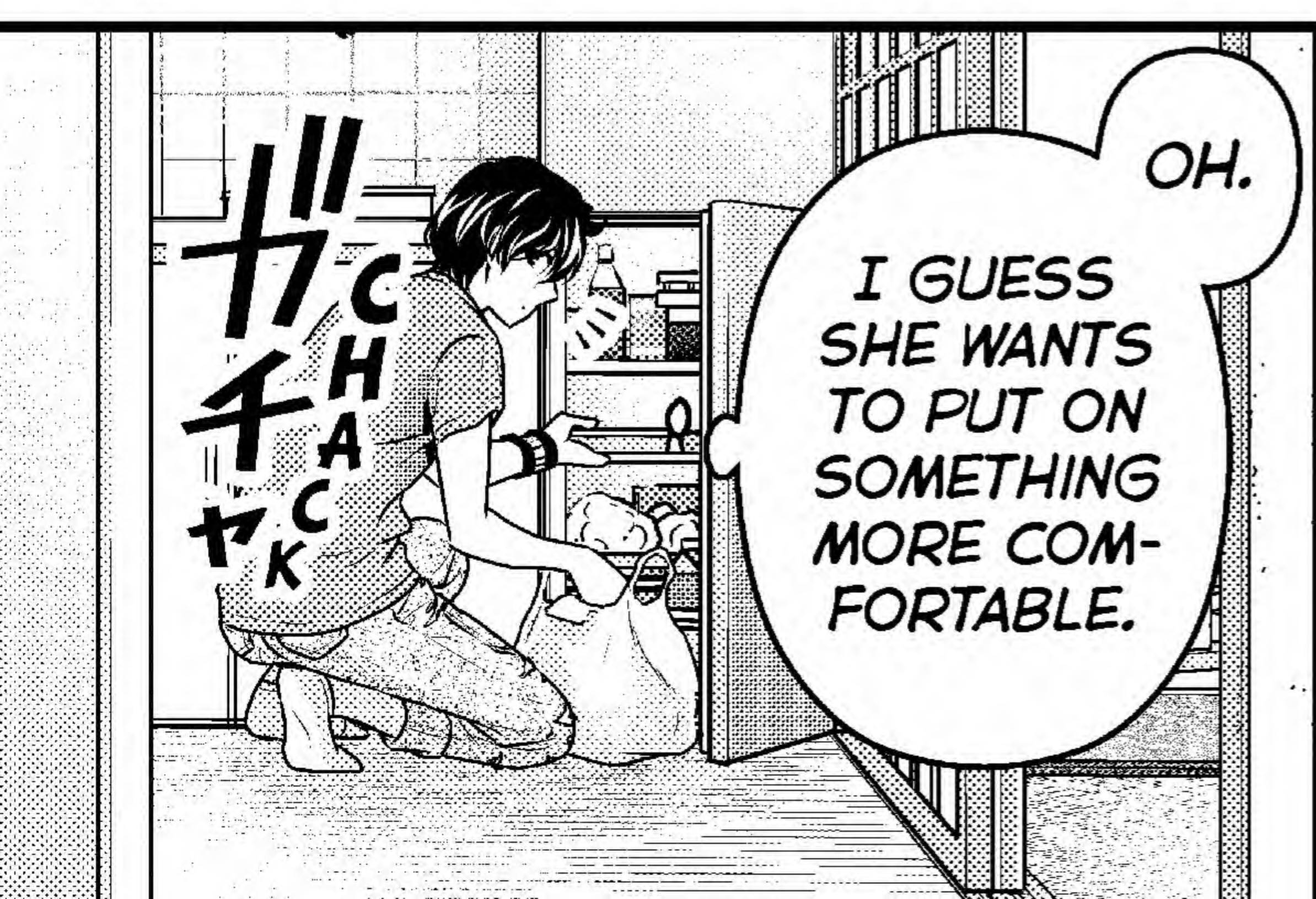
I  
THOUGHT  
WE COULD  
GO TO  
INOKASHIRA  
PARK  
FIRST.



THEY  
HAVE  
RENTAL  
BOATS  
THERE  
...

THAT  
SOUNDS  
NICE,  
BUT...

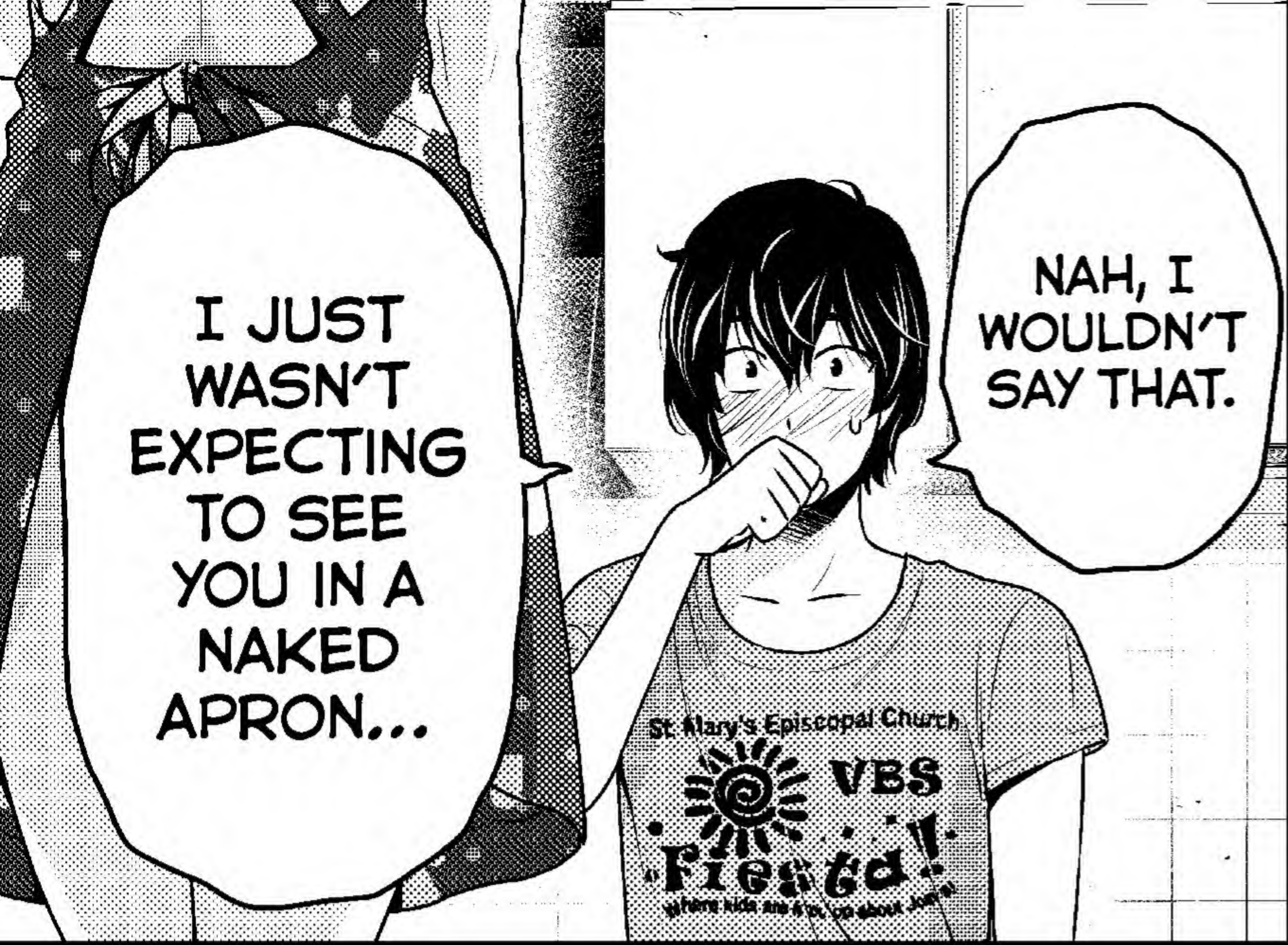






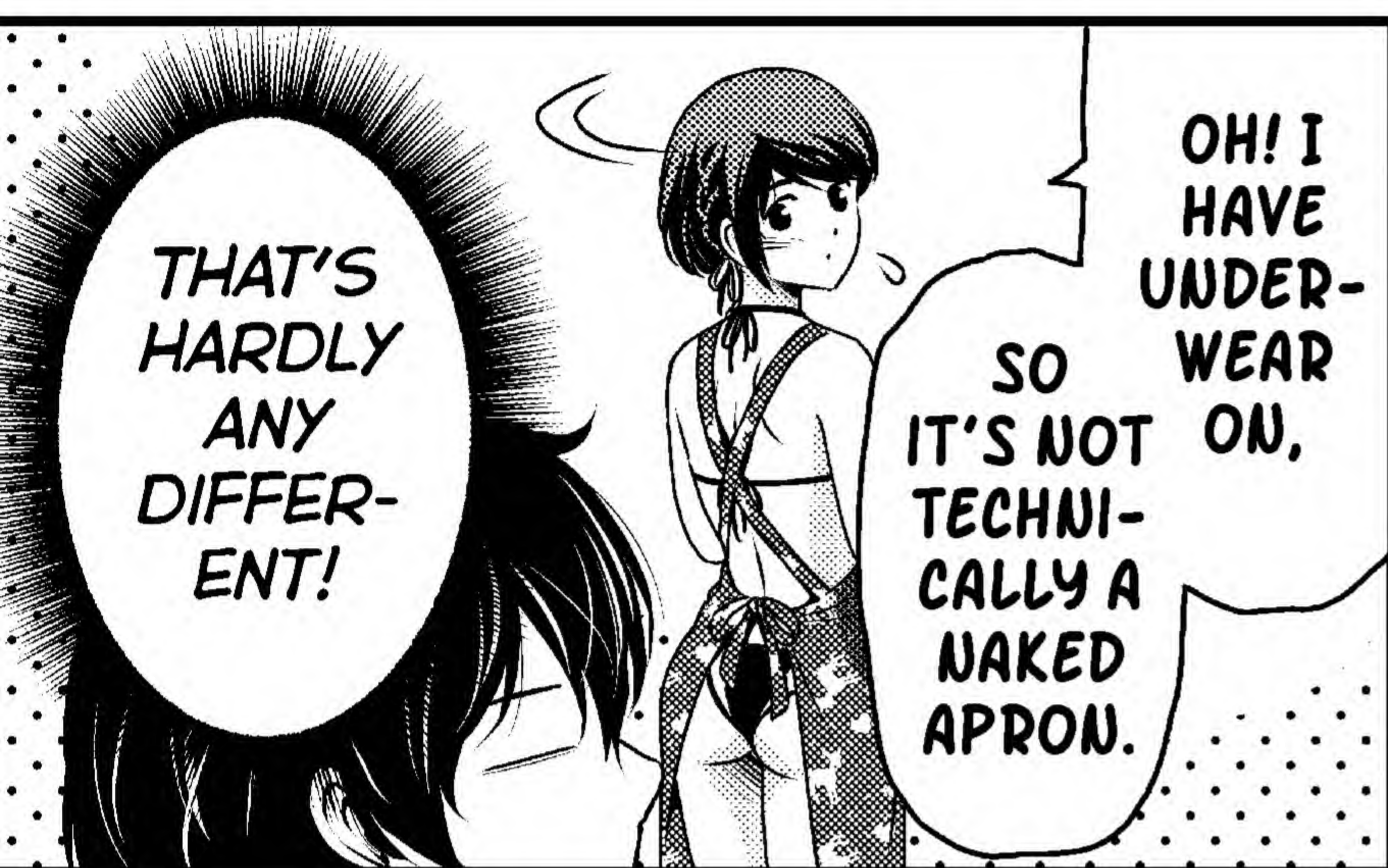






I JUST WASN'T EXPECTING TO SEE YOU IN A NAKED APRON...

NAH, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT.



THAT'S HARDLY ANY DIFFER-  
ENT!

OH! I HAVE UNDER-WEAR ON,  
SO IT'S NOT TECHNI-  
CALLY A NAKED APRON.



UM...  
DO I...

...LOOK WEIRD?



I'M GONNA CHOP THE INGREDIENTS. CAN YOU GIVE ME A HAND? OKAY ...

SIGN: DREAMLAND ENTRANCE



IF SO, THEN HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN GOING ON?!



HUH?

WHAT?

I KNOW! SINCE WE MET UP!

...BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS. A "FANTASY."

FOR STARTERS, HOW CAN I BE SURE THIS ISN'T ANOTHER DREAM?



SURE, I'VE DREAMT AND FANTASIZED ABOUT THIS KINDA SITUATION A FEW TIMES...





WHAT  
ARE YOU  
TALKING  
ABOUT?



...I CAN  
TOUCH  
HER.

BUT  
...

AND SHE  
SMELLS  
NICE, LIKE  
RUI.



A  
DREAM  
?

I WAS  
JUST  
CHECK-  
ING TO  
SEE IF  
THIS  
WAS A  
DREAM.



THAT'S  
FINE, BUT  
SAVE IT  
FOR AFTER  
WE EAT...



FEELS  
LIKE THE  
REAL  
THING,  
TOO...

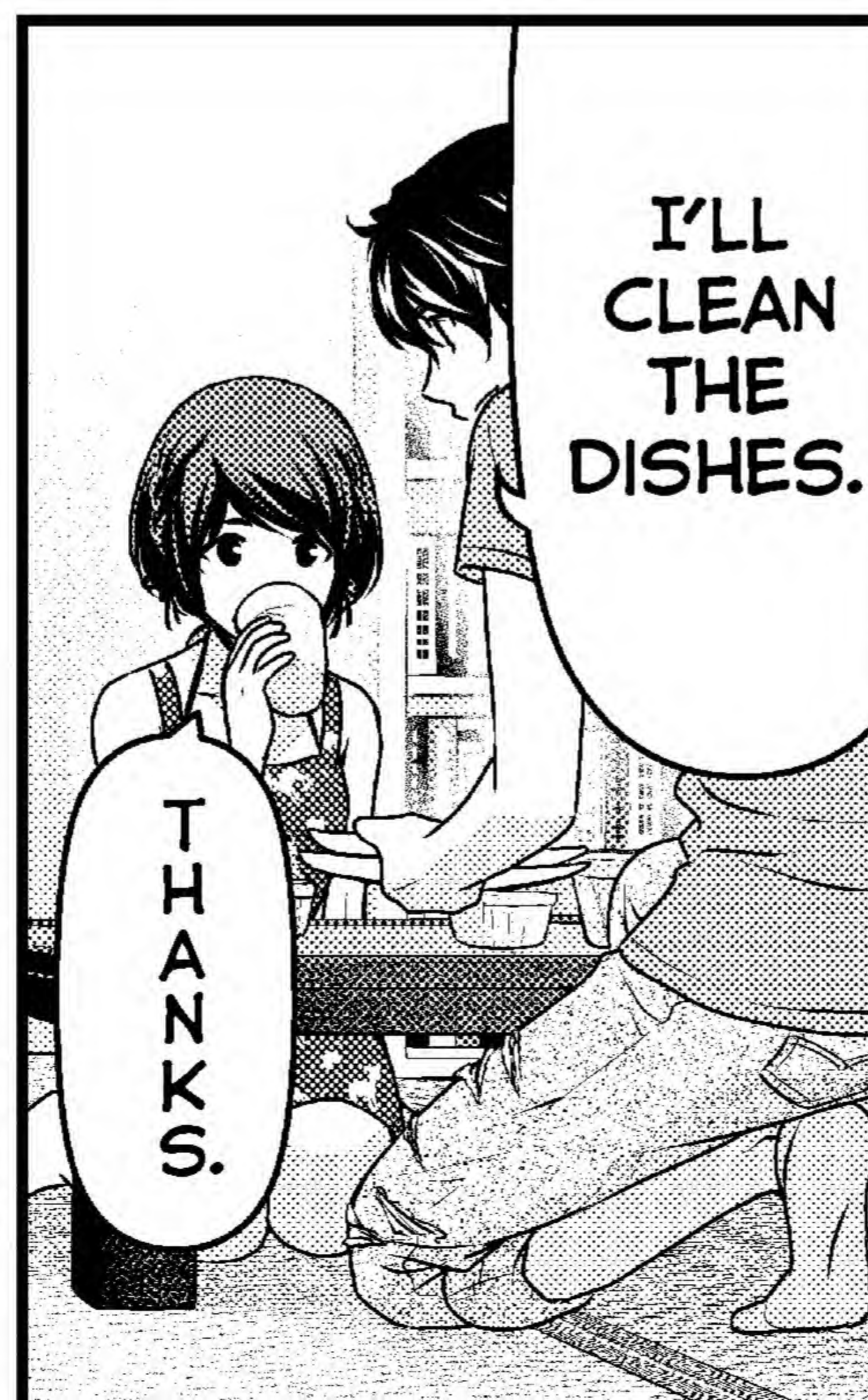
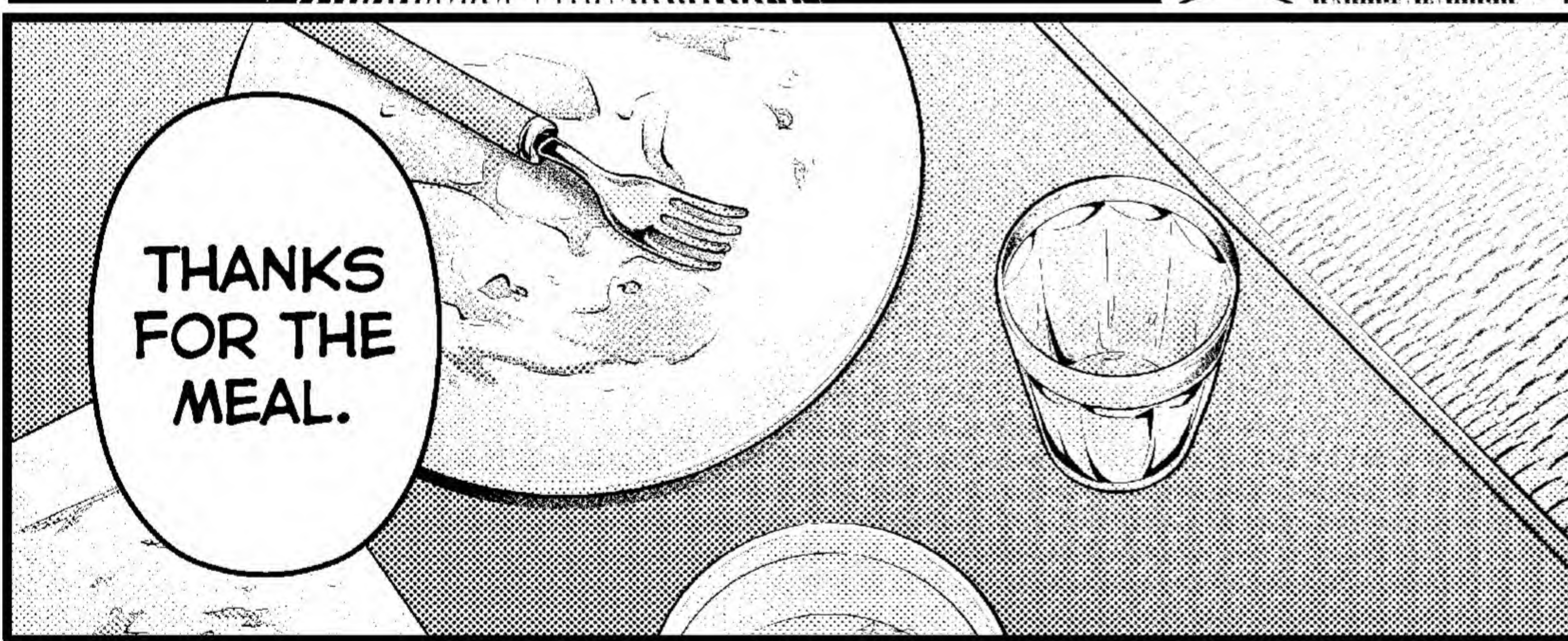
N-

NAT...SUO!











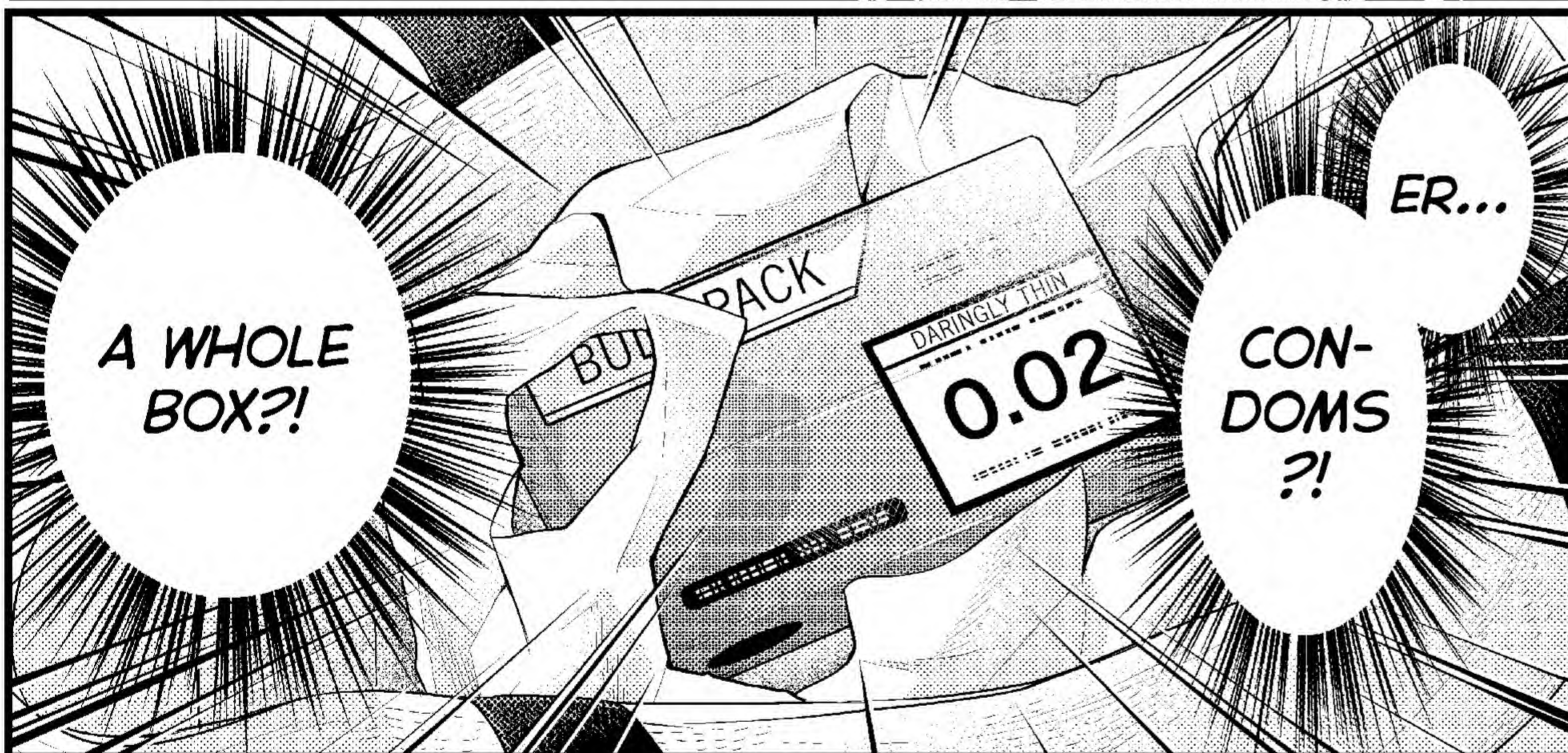






...I MIGHT  
END UP  
EATING  
SASHIMI...

...OFF  
HER  
NAKED  
BODY!



ER...

HONESTLY, I  
KINDA WANNA  
SEE WHERE  
THIS GOES,  
BUT...







...BUT  
YOU  
JUST  
AREN'T  
ACTING  
LIKE  
YOUR-  
SELF!

I KNOW  
I SAID I  
WANTED  
TO FOOL  
AROUND  
ON OUR  
MONTHLY  
DATE,  
TOO...



IF  
THERE'S  
A REASON  
YOU'RE  
DOING ALL  
THIS, THEN  
TELL ME!

DID  
SOME-  
THING  
HAPPEN  
?!



YOU'RE  
ACTING  
WEIRD  
TODAY!

WHAT'S  
GOING  
ON,  
RUI?!



I JUST  
THOUGHT  
YOU MIGHT  
LIKE IT IF I  
DID THIS.

NOT  
REALLY...



I GUESS  
THAT MADE  
HER REALLY  
WORRIED.

SHE  
THOUGHT WE  
MIGHT GET  
TOO LONELY  
AND START  
GROWING  
APART IF WE  
DID THAT.

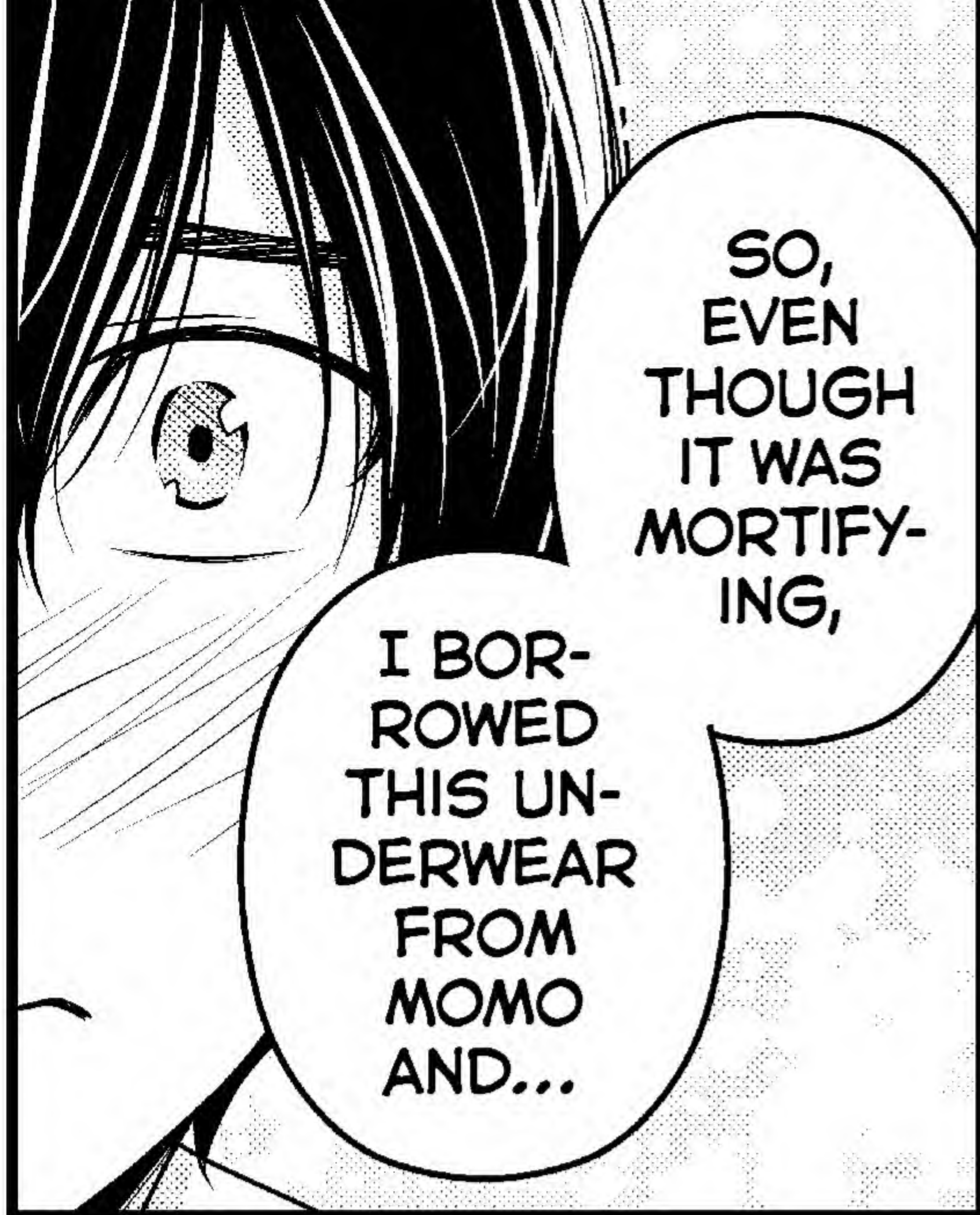
I TOLD  
MOMO  
...

...WE WERE  
LIMITING  
OURSELVES  
TO ONE DATE  
A MONTH.

HUH  
...?

...





SO,  
EVEN  
THOUGH  
IT WAS  
MORTIFY-  
ING,

I BOR-  
ROWED  
THIS UN-  
DERWEAR  
FROM  
MOMO  
AND...



JEEZ  
...



...SO I GOT  
SCARED THAT  
YOU MIGHT  
NOT CARE  
ABOUT ME  
ANYMORE.

THEN I  
JUST GOT  
MORE AND  
MORE  
WORRIED.

YOU  
DIDN'T  
SEEM THAT  
EXCITED  
WHEN I  
BROUGHT  
UP OUR  
DATE...



THERE'S  
NO WAY  
I'D EVER  
STOP  
CARING  
ABOUT  
YOU!

YOU  
DUMMY  
!

IF  
ANYTHING,  
YOU  
HAD ME  
WORRIED!

MAN, I  
SWEAR...



...AND  
SO  
AMUS-  
ING!

THOSE KINDS  
OF TACTICS  
ARE HER  
FORTE, SO YOU  
SHOULDN'T  
USE HER AS A  
REFERENCE...

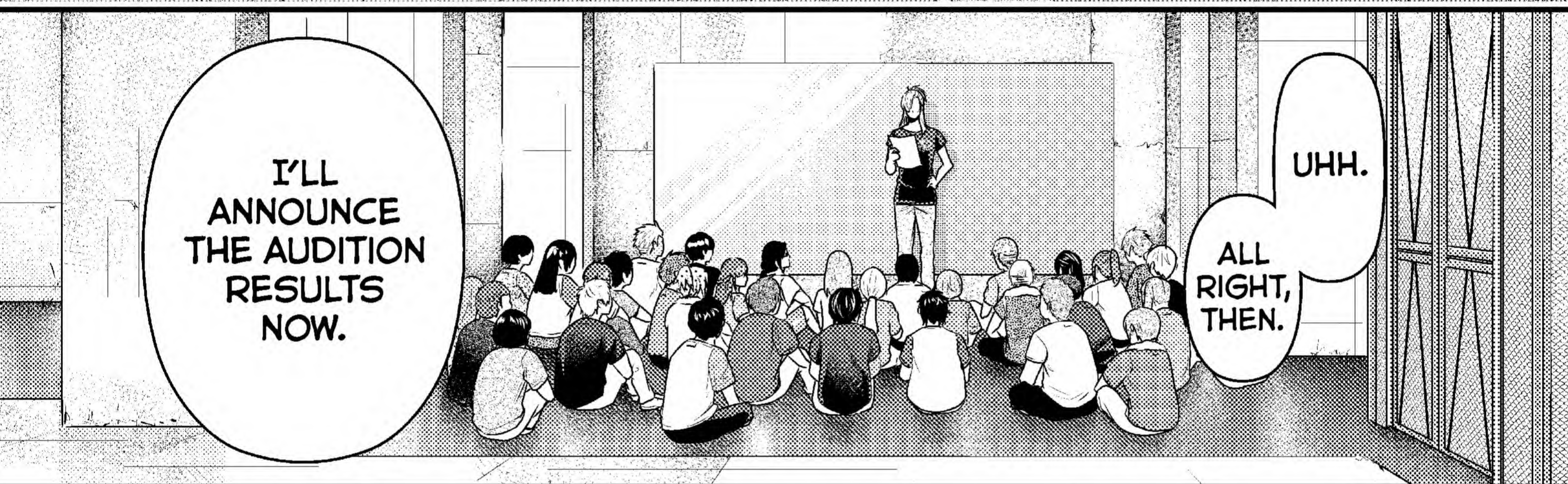
YEAH.

DID  
MOMO  
TELL YOU  
TO WEAR  
THOSE  
CLOTHES  
AND THE  
NAKED  
APRON,  
TOO?

THE  
HUMAN  
HEART  
IS SO  
FRUSTRAT-  
ING, SO  
TEDIOUS  
...



# DOME X GIRL



I'LL  
ANNOUNCE  
THE AUDITION  
RESULTS  
NOW.

UHH.

ALL  
RIGHT,  
THEN.



AND  
PLAYING THE  
CO-STAR,  
MATILDA,  
THE CLUB'S  
TOP DANCER  
...

GULP



ANNA  
YUZURI.

YES!

THE  
PROPRI-  
ETRESS,  
CATHERINE,



FIRST  
UP,

FOR  
OUR LEAD,  
EDDIE THE  
DETECTIVE,

THIRD-  
YEAR,  
SHINICHI  
OGINUMA.

YES!





**NENE  
KUZU-  
OKA.**



**YOSHI-  
NO-  
SEMPAI  
...**

**I'M  
SORRY  
YOU  
DIDN'T  
GET THE  
ROLE.**



**TH-  
THANKS  
...**

**...MANAGED  
TO PULL  
IT OFF SO  
WELL!**

**I COULDN'T  
BELIEVE SOMEONE  
LIKE YOU, WHO  
DIDN'T HAVE A  
SINGLE OUNCE  
OF SEX APPEAL  
IN YOUR WHOLE  
BODY...**

**BUT I WAS  
REALLY  
BLOWN AWAY  
BY YOUR  
AUDITION!**



**I'M GOING  
TO DO  
EVERYTHING  
I CAN TO  
PLAY THE  
ROLE I'VE  
BEEN  
GIVEN...**

**...TO  
THE BEST  
OF MY  
ABILITY!**



**I MIGHT  
HAVE ONLY  
GOTTEN A  
SIDE PART  
THIS TIME  
...**

**...BUT  
I'M NOT  
BUMMED  
ABOUT  
IT.**

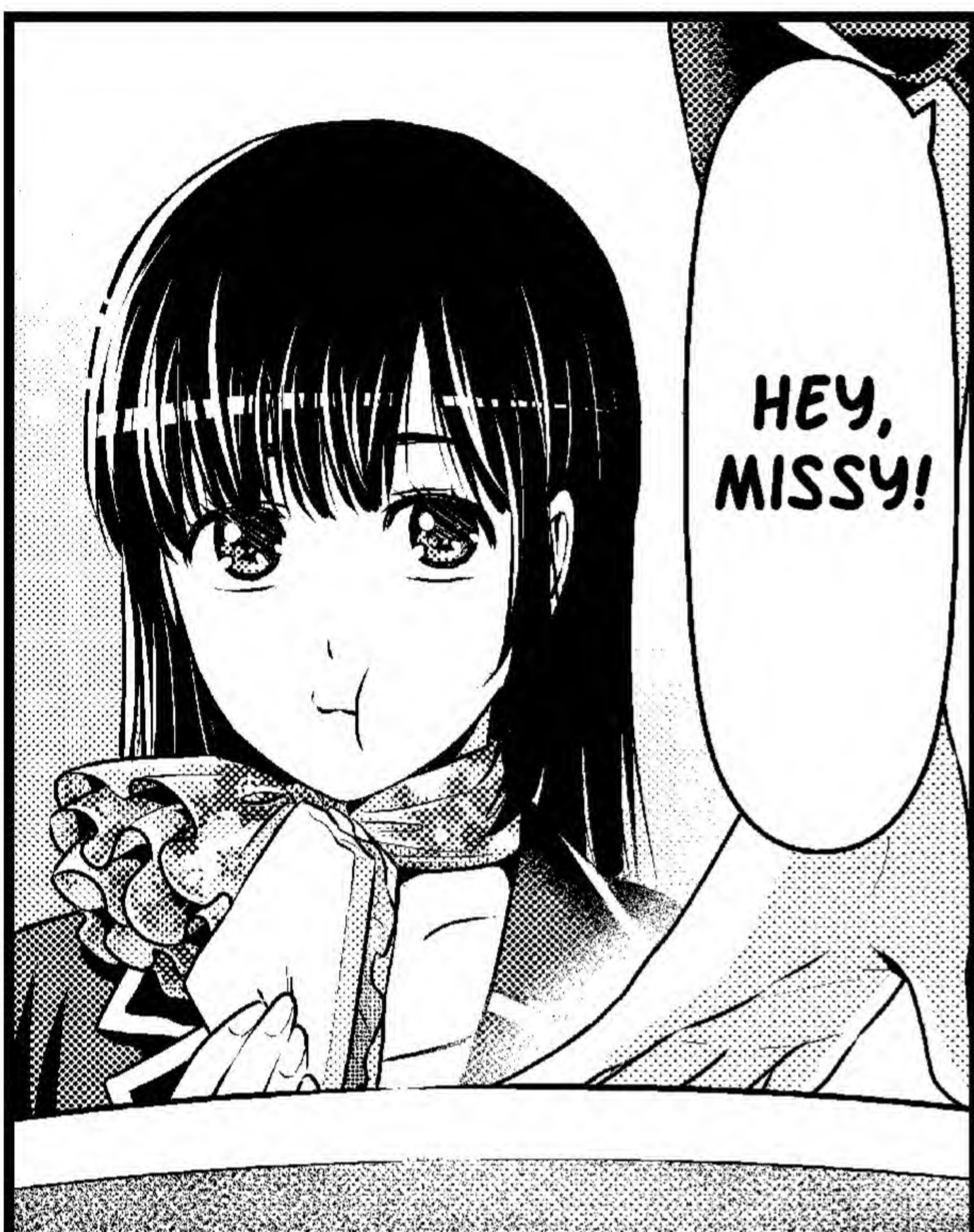




**CHAPTER 169: NARROWING OPTIONS**







HEY,  
MISSY!



I recommend  
this Japanese  
restaurant.



AW,  
SHUT  
UP!

HOW'D  
WHAT  
GO?

DROPPING  
SUBJECTS  
FROM  
SENTENCES  
IS A SIGN  
OF OLD AGE,  
SUSUKINO-  
SHI.



OH!

WITH  
THAT GUY  
YOUR  
MOM SET  
YOU UP  
WITH!

DIDN'T  
YOU SAY  
YOU WERE  
GOING TO  
A HOUSE  
PARTY?

YOU  
KNOW,  
THAT!



HOW'D  
IT GO?!

DID  
YOU  
HAVE  
FUN?



WELL,  
ABOUT  
THAT...

GLAD  
YOU  
COULD  
MAKE  
IT!

HEY!

I-IT'S  
NICE TO  
MEET YOU.  
MY NAME  
IS HINA  
TACHI-  
BANA.

LIKewise.  
NAME'S  
MORIGUCHI.  
I'M  
TANABE'S  
SENIOR AT  
WORK.

HE'S  
TOLD ME  
A LOT  
ABOUT  
YOU.

THANK  
YOU FOR  
INVITING  
US.

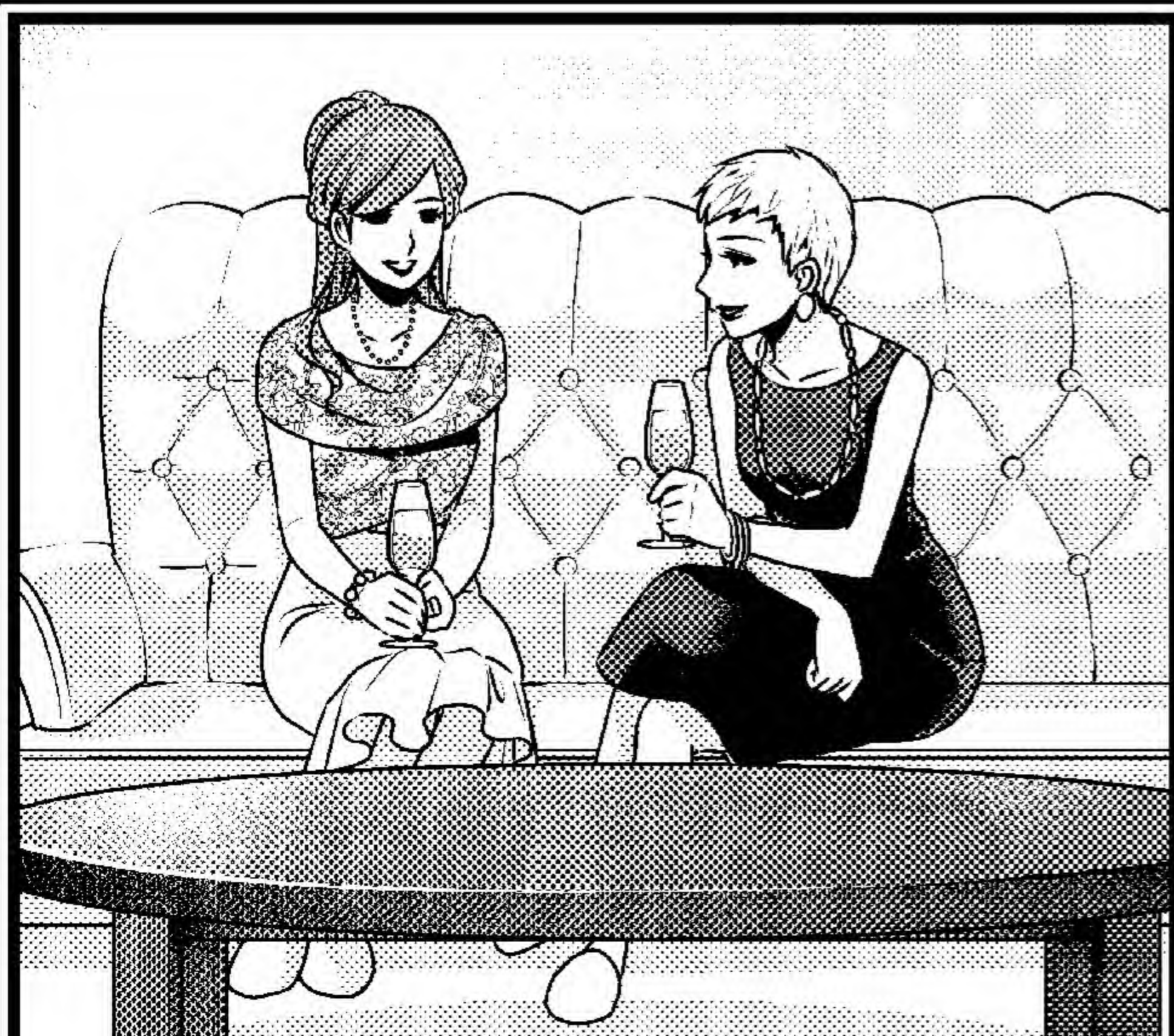
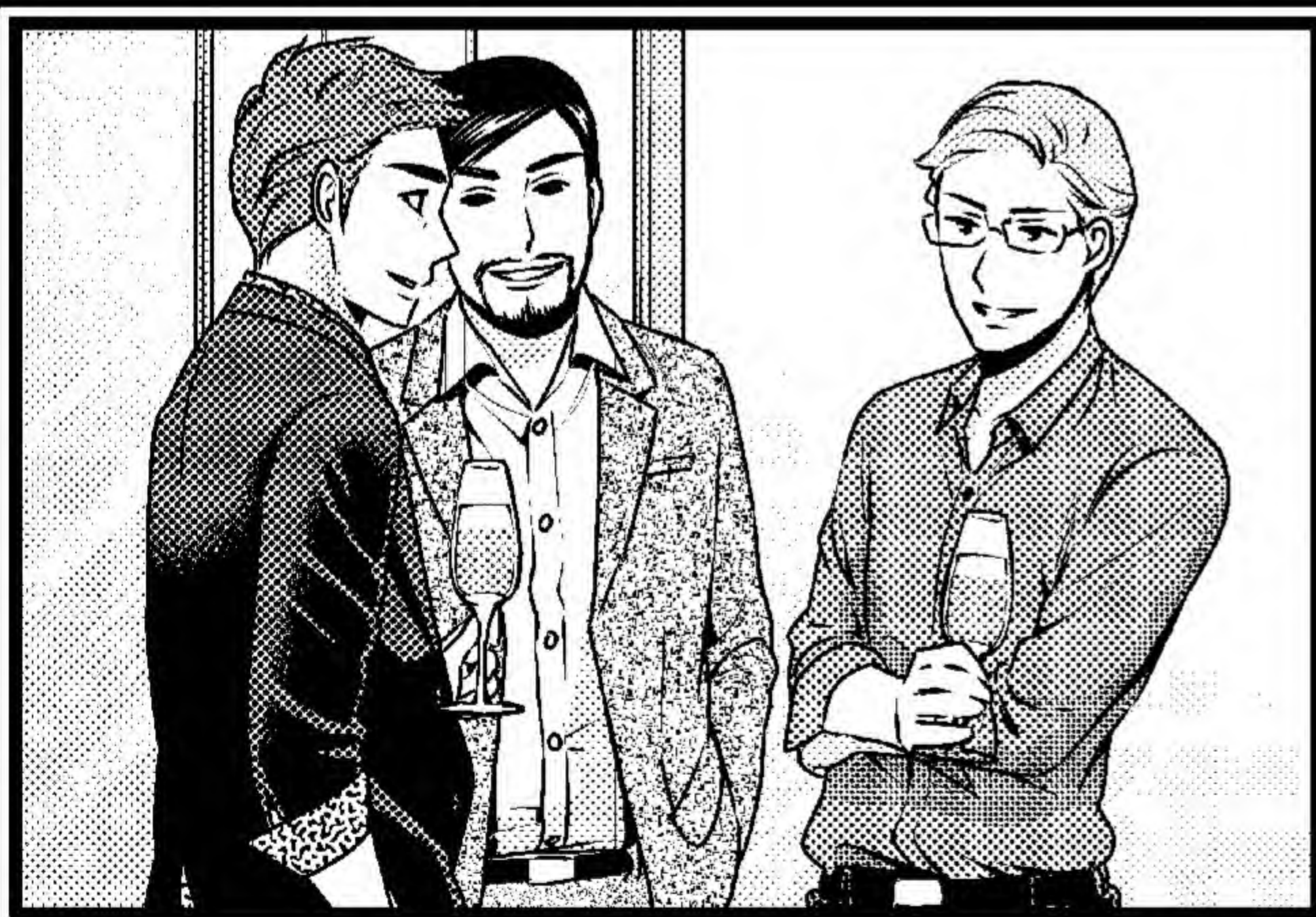
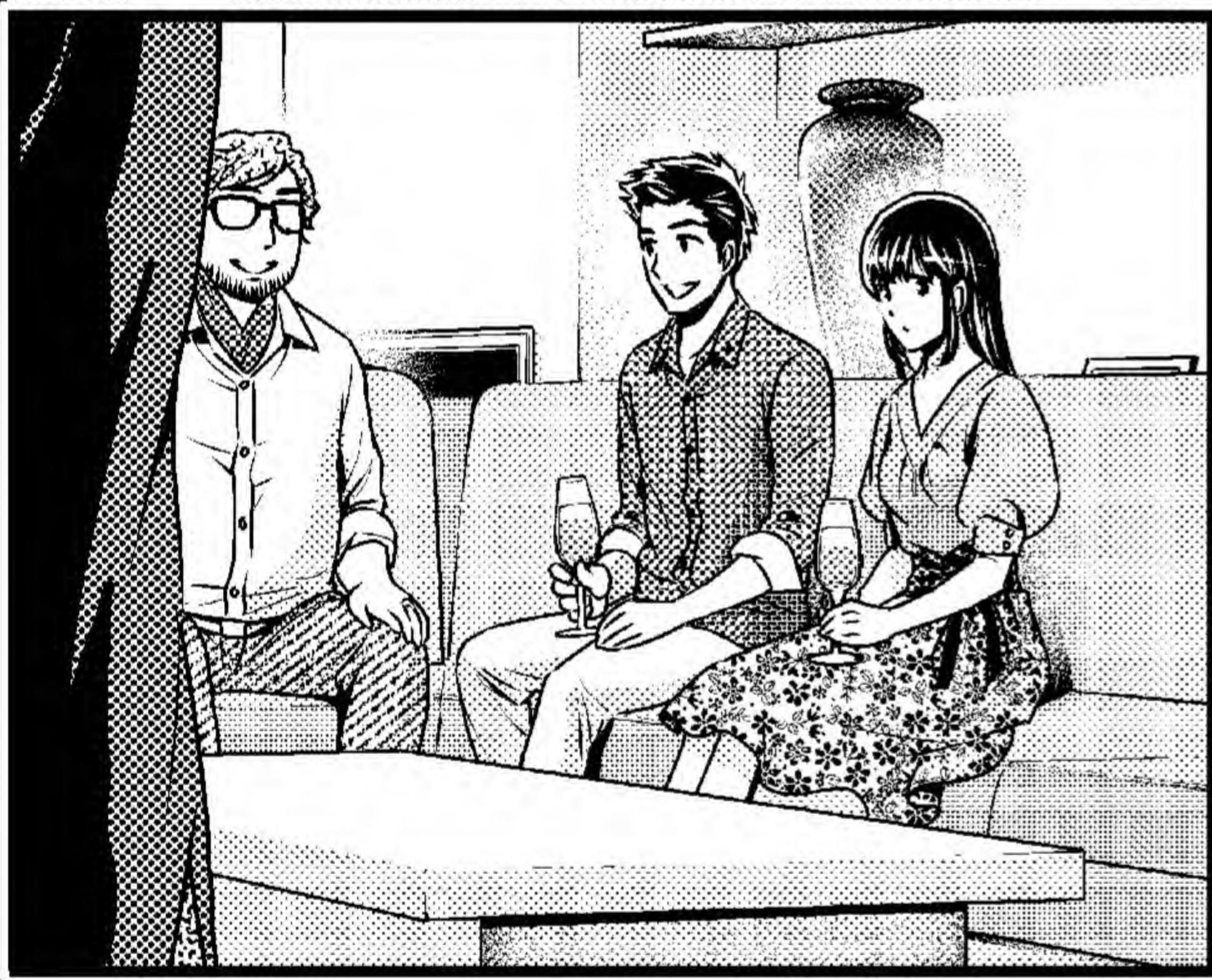




WHOA...  
WHAT A RITZY  
APARTMENT.

YOU'RE  
JUST AS  
CUTE AS  
HE SAID.

MAKE  
YOURSELF  
AT HOME.



IS SHE  
YOUR  
FIANCÉE,  
TANABE-  
KUN?

OH,  
NO. WE  
HAVEN'T  
MOVED  
THAT FAR  
ALONG  
YET.

OH,  
SO IT'S  
ONLY A  
MATTER  
OF  
TIME?

THEY HAVE  
BEER AND  
CHAMPAGNE.

OR  
WOULD YOU  
PREFER  
SOMETHING  
STRONGER  
?

WHAT  
WOULD  
YOU  
LIKE TO  
DRINK?

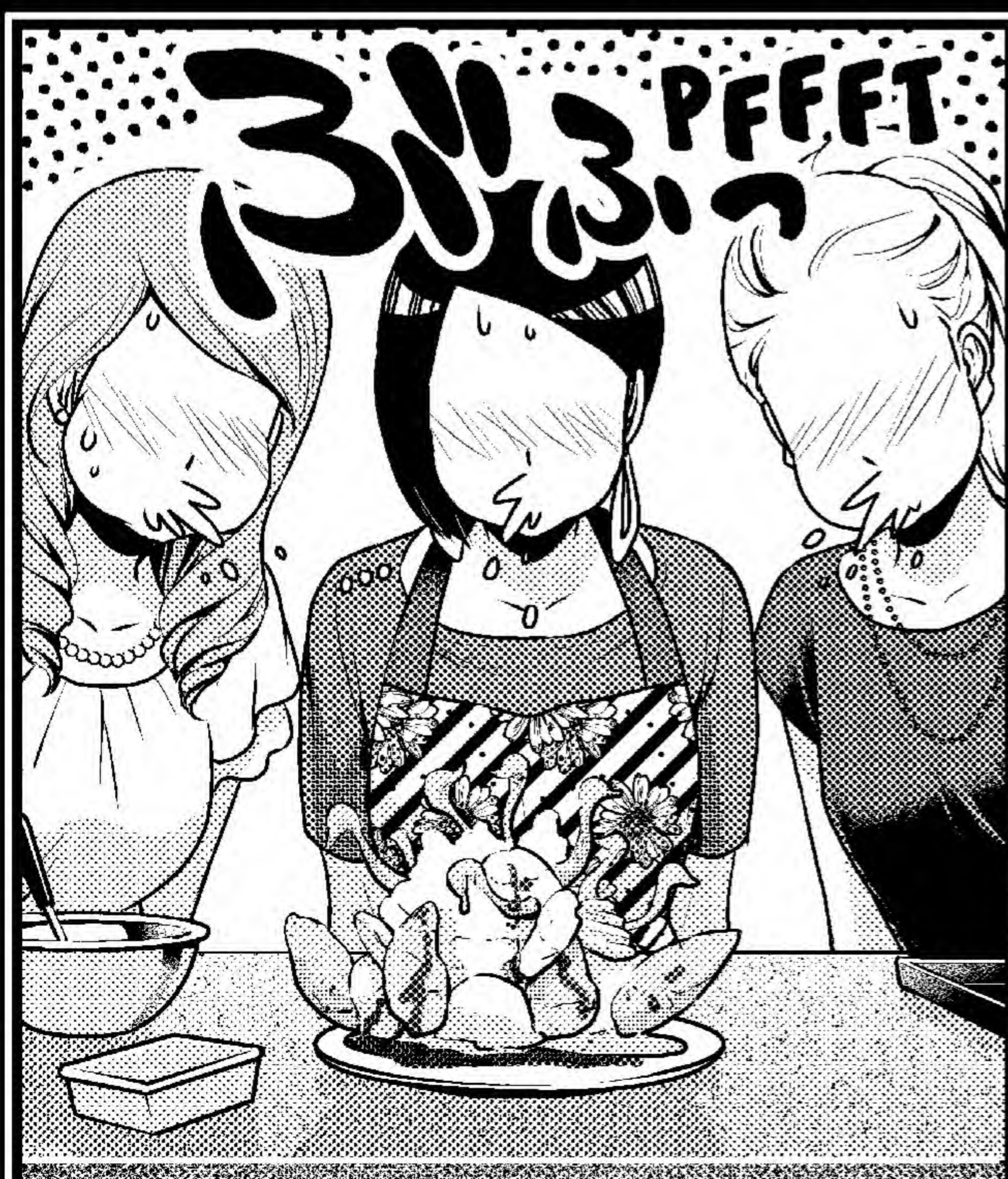
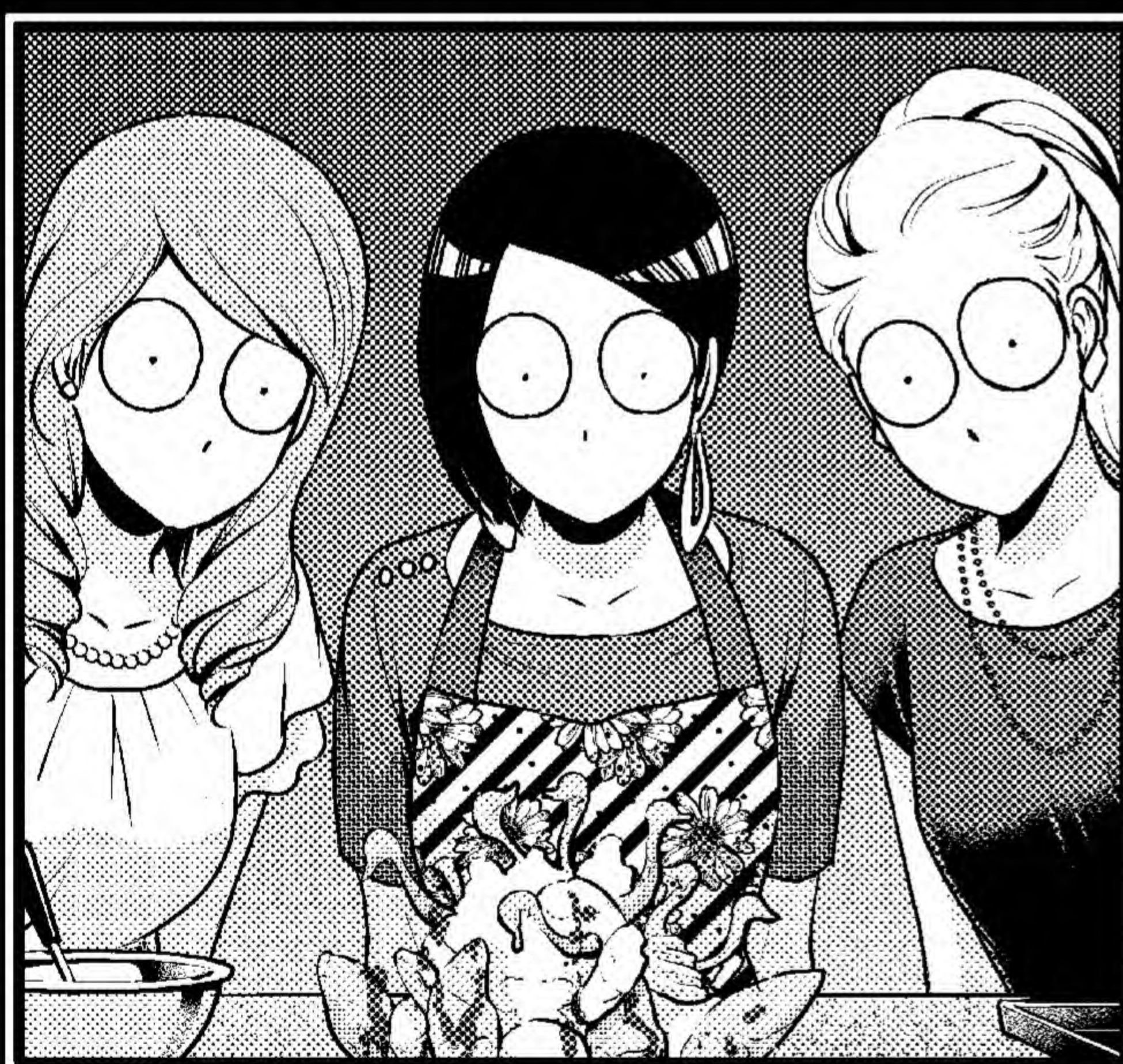
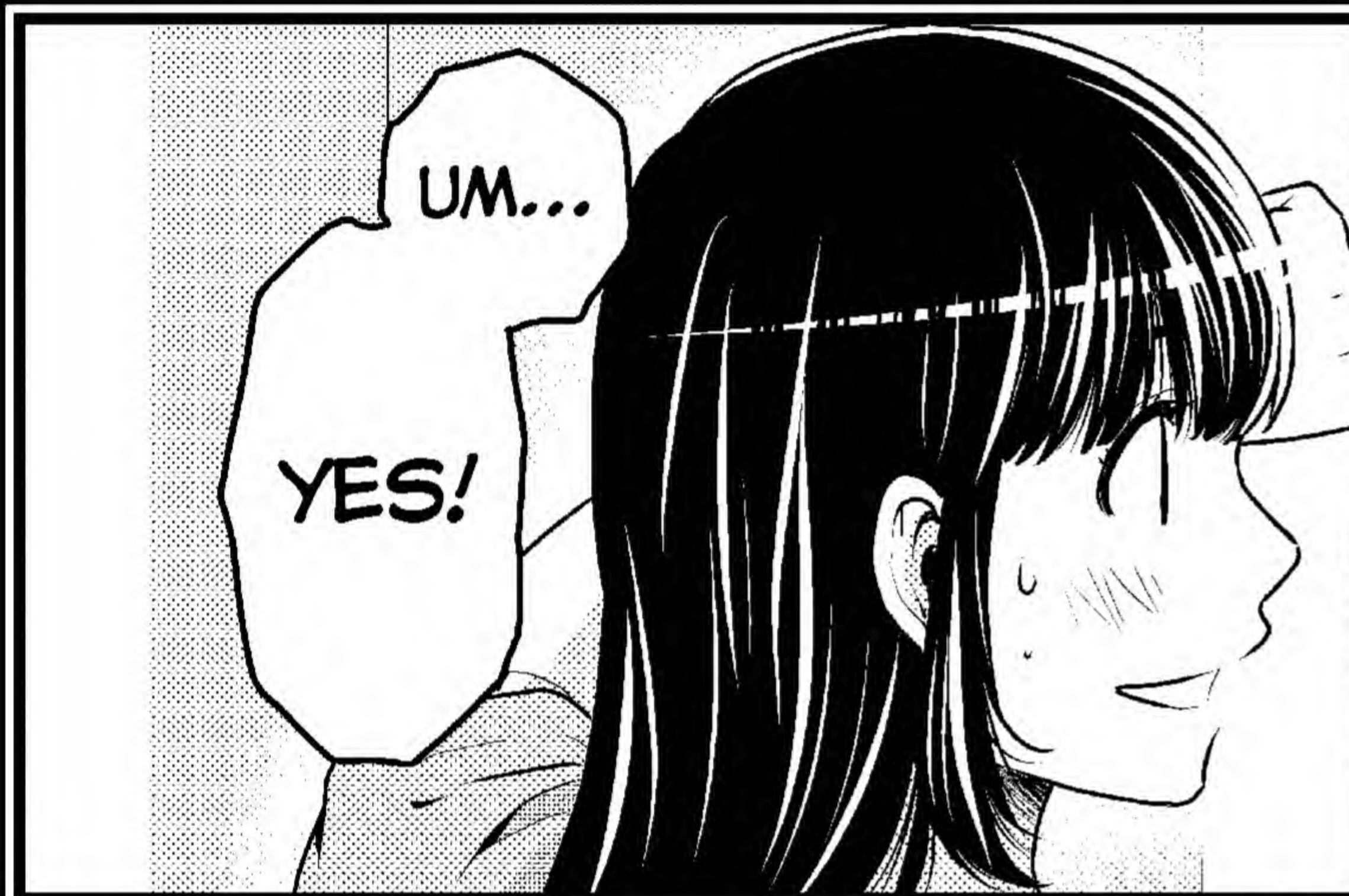
OH  
...

BEER'S  
TOTALLY  
FINE.













LOOK AT THIS!

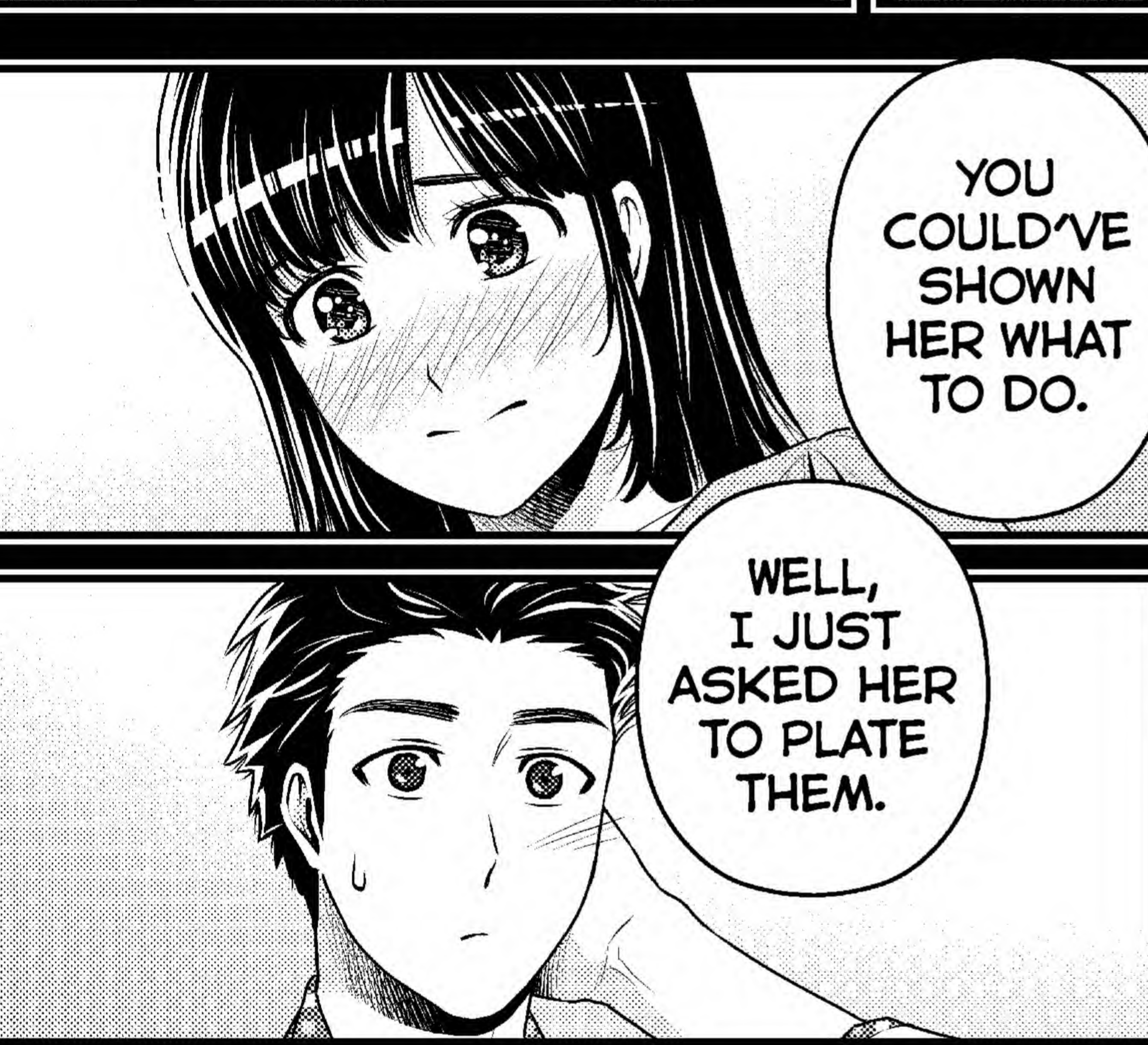
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

HINA-SAN MADE SOME OF THE MOST ARTISTIC CREAM PUFFS I'VE EVER SEEN!



THE SWANS TURNED INTO MONSTERS!

THAT'S AMAZING!



YOU COULD'VE SHOWN HER WHAT TO DO.

WELL, I JUST ASKED HER TO PLATE THEM.



UM...

SORRY ABOUT TODAY.

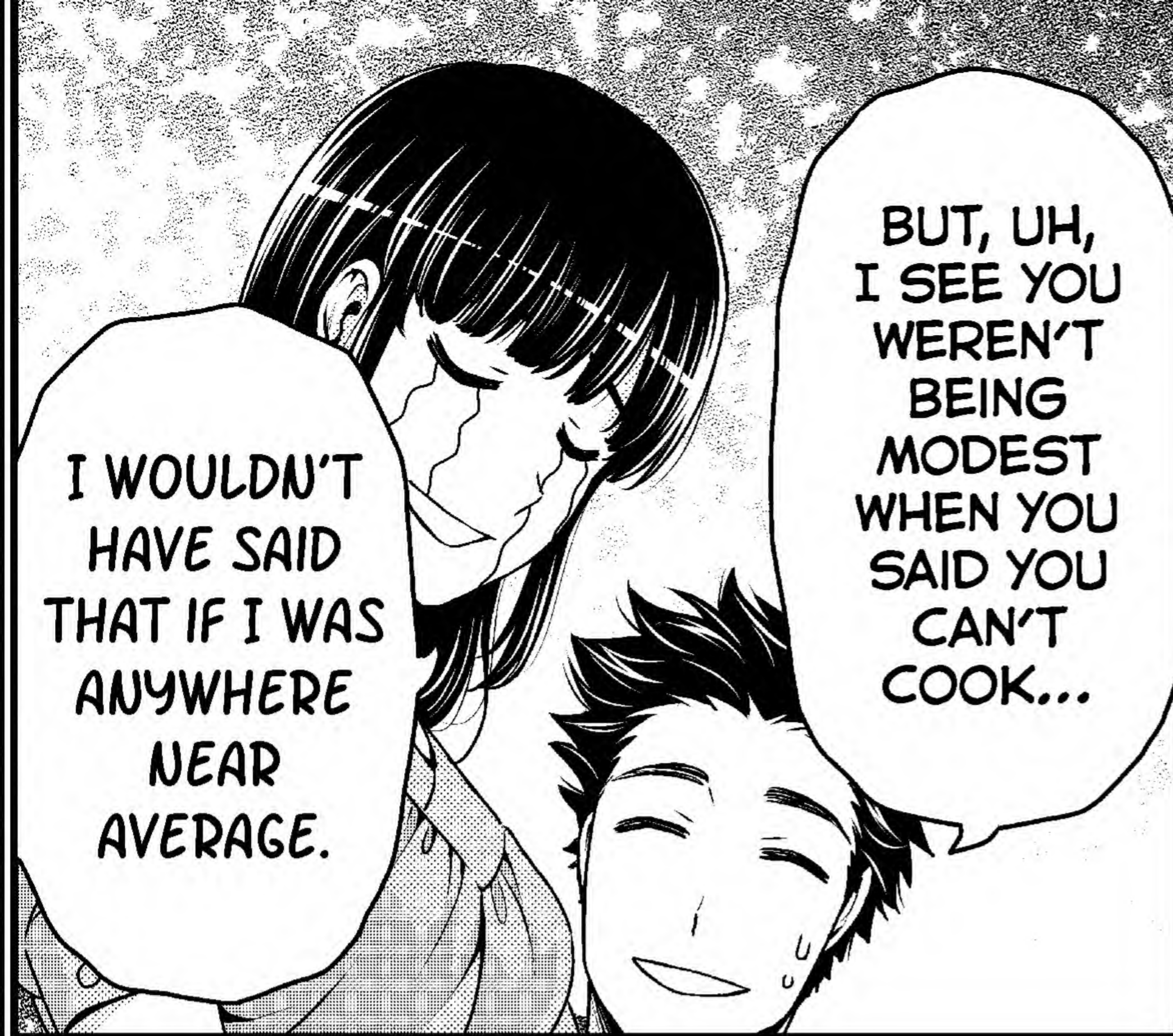


HA, HA, HA! NOW THAT'S SOMETHING.

IT LOOKS LIKE MODERN ART.

MIND IF I TAKE A PICTURE?





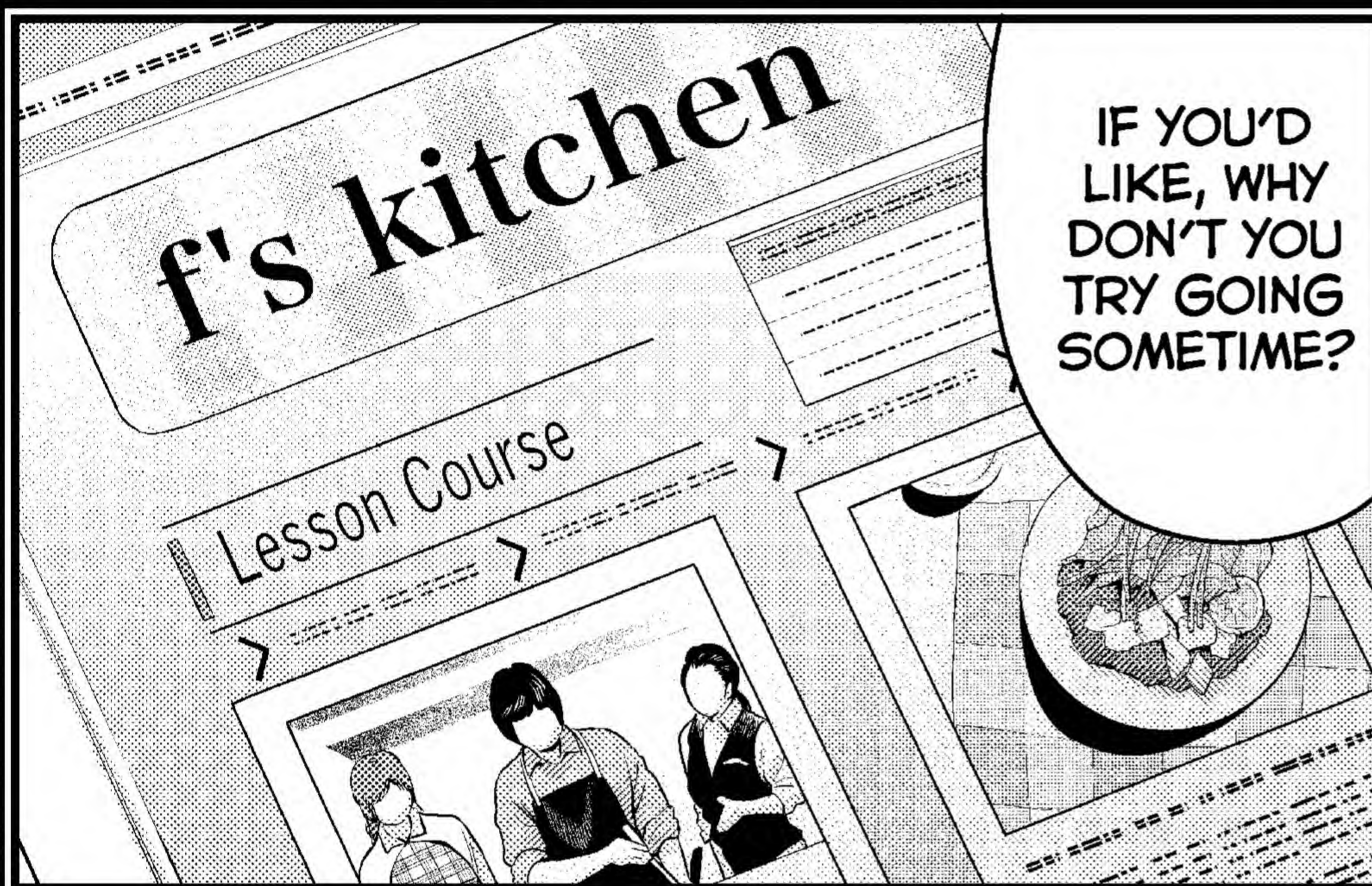
I WOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT IF I WAS ANYWHERE NEAR AVERAGE.

BUT, UH, I SEE YOU WEREN'T BEING MODEST WHEN YOU SAID YOU CAN'T COOK...



NOT AT ALL! DON'T SWEAT IT!

I KIND OF EMBARRASSED YOU IN FRONT OF EVERYONE...



IF YOU'D LIKE, WHY DON'T YOU TRY GOING SOMETIME?



APPARENTLY, IT'S PRETTY POPULAR.

OH, YEAH. MY CO-WORKER'S WIFE RUNS A COOKING CLASS.



THESE ARE FOR YOU.

ALSO,



YOU SAID YOU'VE BEEN INTO WHISKEY LATELY.

JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING.



I'LL SEND YOU THE ADDRESS ON LINE.

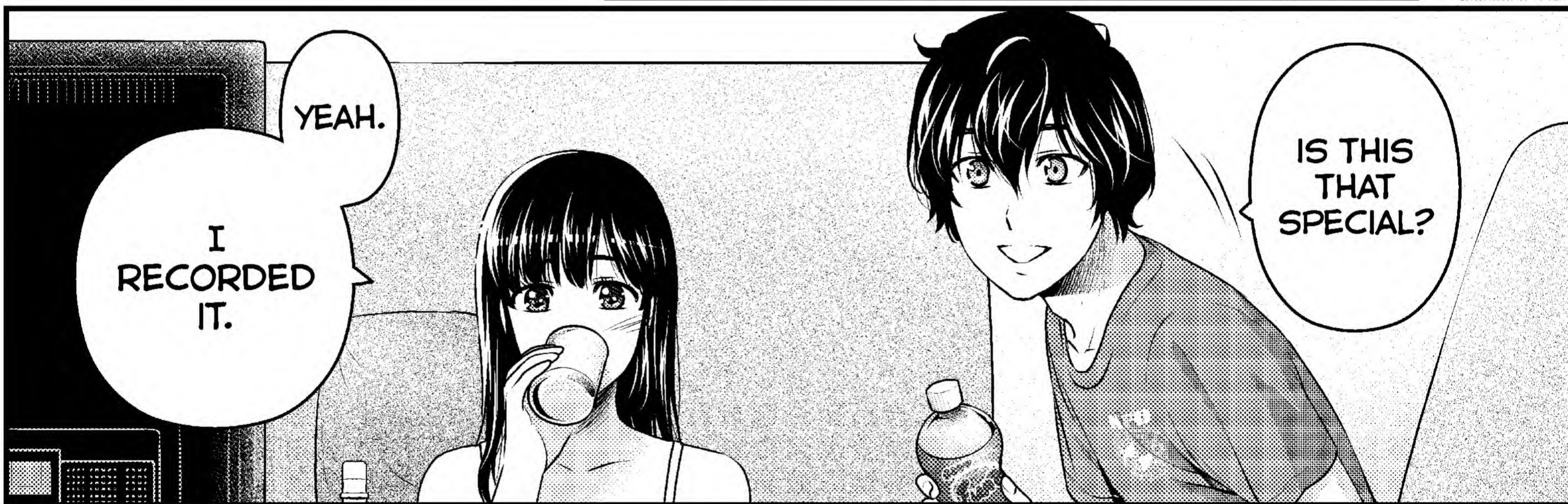
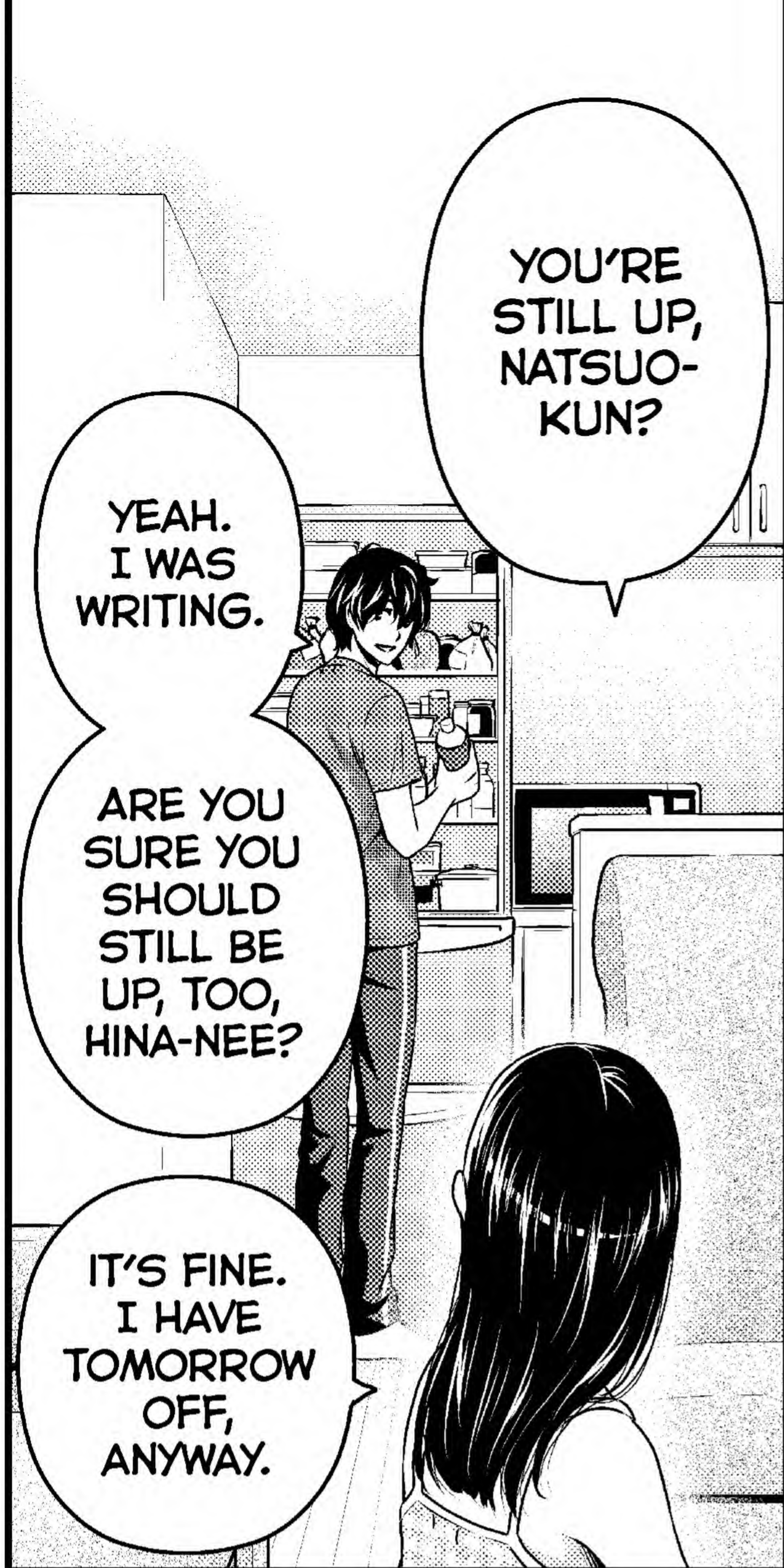
UM...

TH-THANKS.













YOUR NEW NOVEL, I MEAN.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?



WELL...

I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THE CRUX OF IT'S A LOVE STORY.

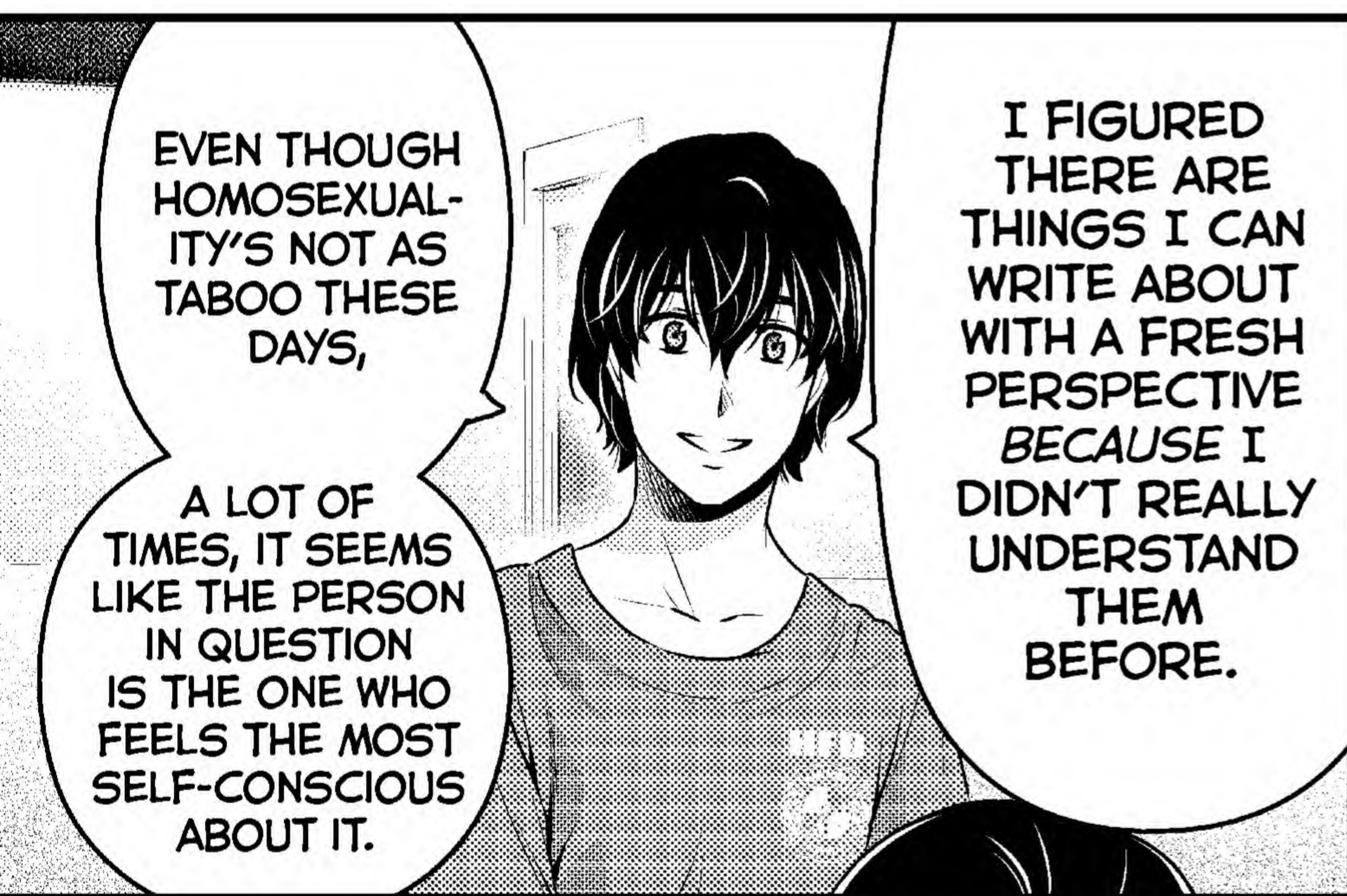
A LOVE STORY?

YEAH. A GAY LOVE STORY.



IF WE DRANK TOGETHER...

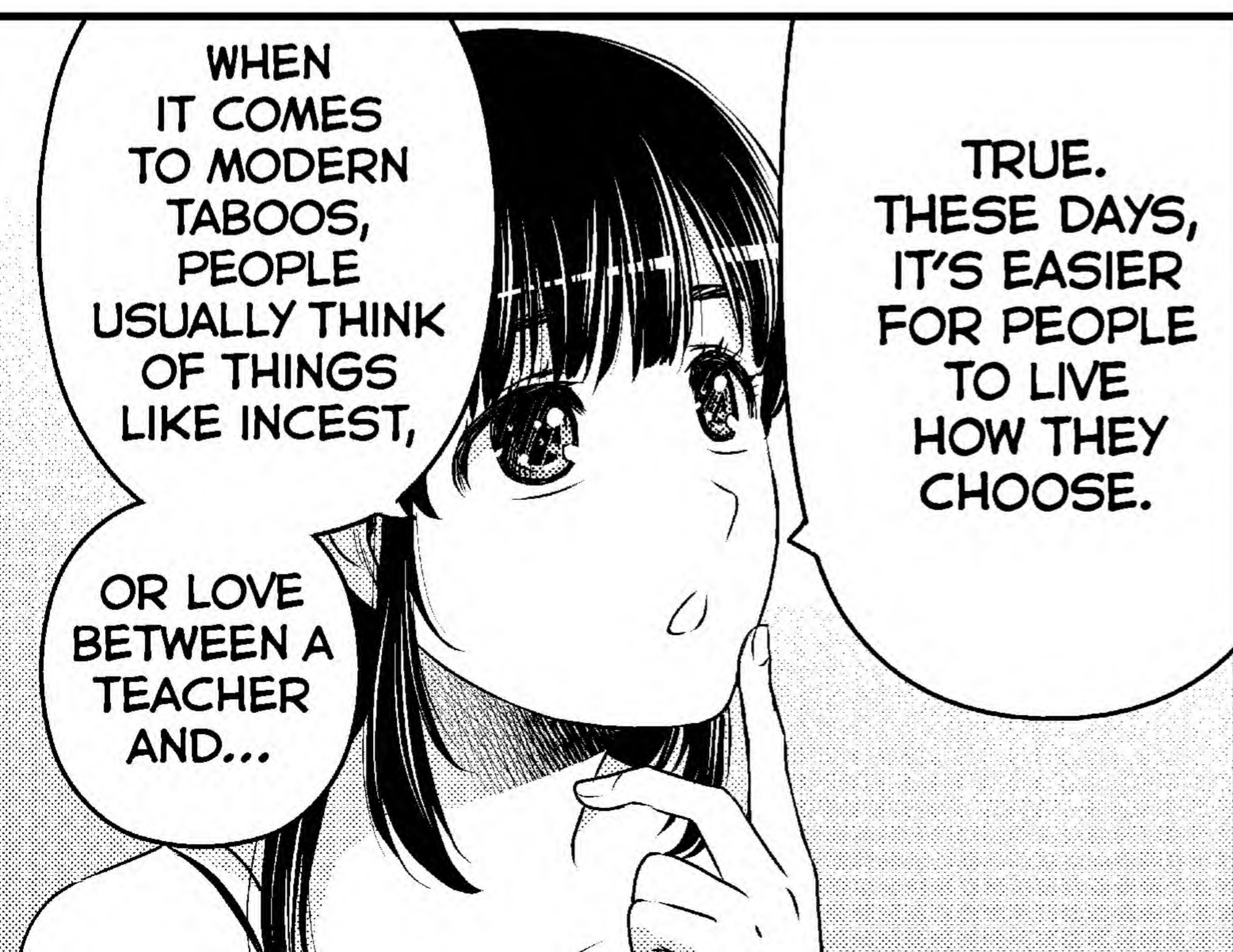
...I MIGHT SERIOUSLY POUNCE ON HIM.



EVEN THOUGH HOMOSEXUALITY'S NOT AS TABOO THESE DAYS,

A LOT OF TIMES, IT SEEMS LIKE THE PERSON IN QUESTION IS THE ONE WHO FEELS THE MOST SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT IT.

I FIGURED THERE ARE THINGS I CAN WRITE ABOUT WITH A FRESH PERSPECTIVE BECAUSE I DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND THEM BEFORE.



WHEN IT COMES TO MODERN TABOOS, PEOPLE USUALLY THINK OF THINGS LIKE INCEST,

OR LOVE BETWEEN A TEACHER AND...

TRUE. THESE DAYS, IT'S EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE HOW THEY CHOOSE.

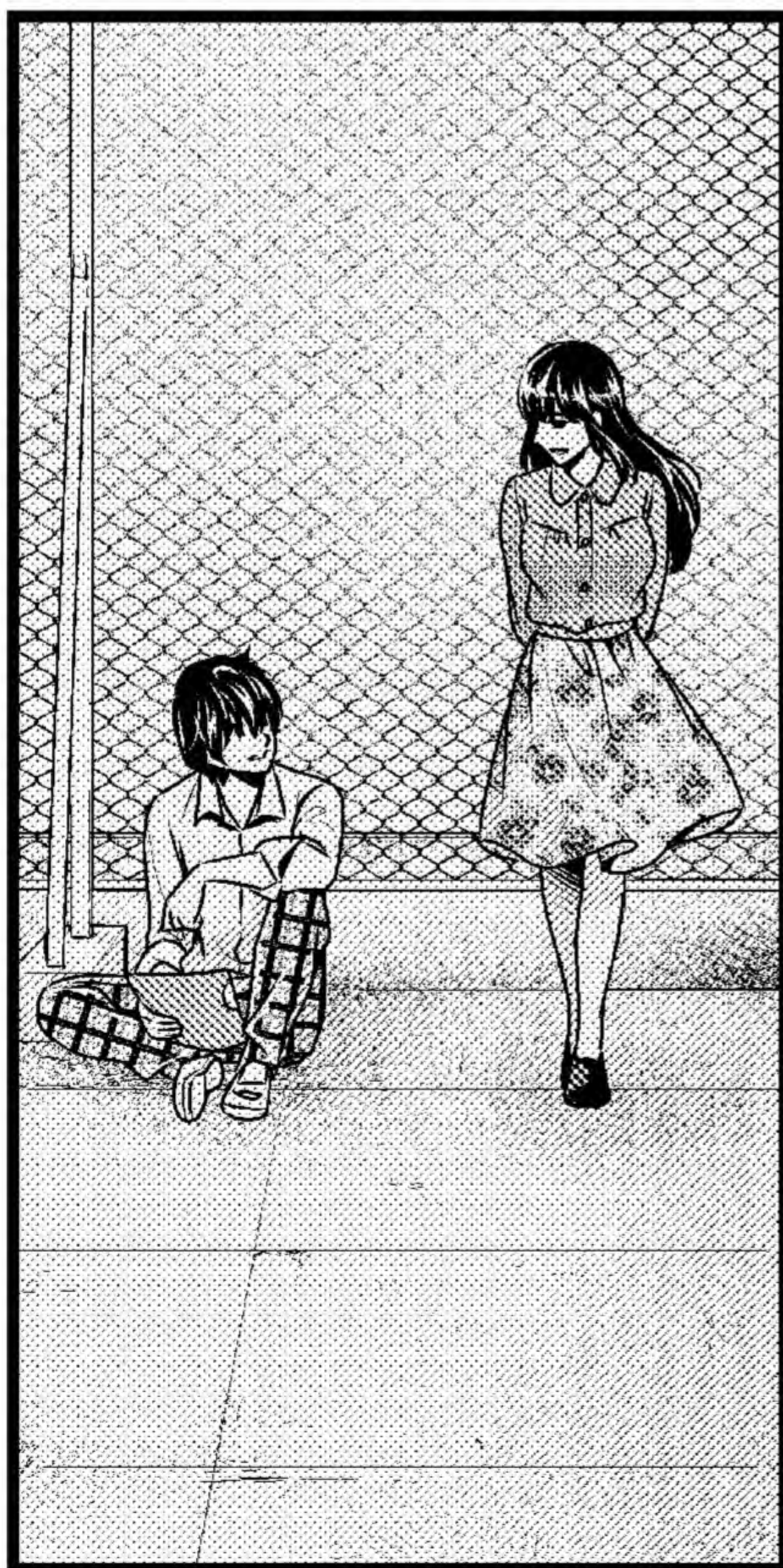


THAT'S A PRETTY TOUGH THEME TO TACKLE.

UH-HUH. I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT ALL THAT STUFF,

BUT I HAD A CHANCE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT RECENTLY.









I'VE BEEN WONDERING IF I SHOULD CHANGE MY STYLE AND THEMES TO BE MORE MARKETABLE.

LATE-  
LY,



STRICTLY SPEAKING, THERE ARE A LOT MORE CASES WHERE AN UNSPOKEN AGREEMENT DOESN'T REALLY CUT IT!

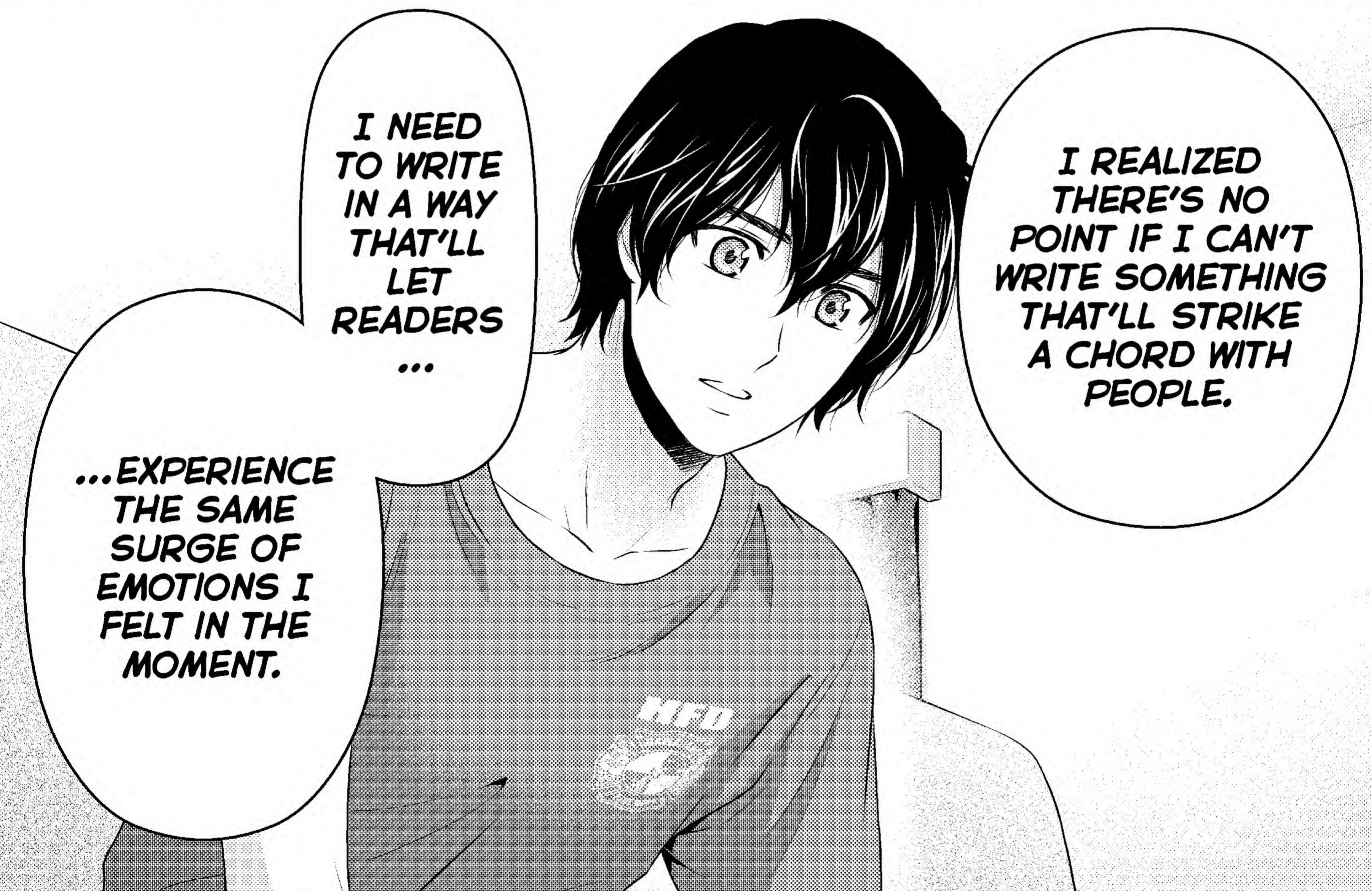
ANYWAY, I GUESS THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF EXAMPLES!



JUST WRITING ABOUT THEM ISN'T ENOUGH.

THEN AGAIN,

BUT I REALIZED WHAT I REALLY WANT TO WRITE ABOUT IS HUMAN EMOTIONS.



I NEED TO WRITE IN A WAY THAT'LL LET READERS ...

...EXPERIENCE THE SAME SURGE OF EMOTIONS I FELT IN THE MOMENT.

I REALIZED THERE'S NO POINT IF I CAN'T WRITE SOMETHING THAT'LL STRIKE A CHORD WITH PEOPLE.



I REALIZED THAT WHEN I STARTED THIS NEW STORY.

AND TO DO THAT, I'VE GOTTA WORK HARDER.









THERE'S SOME-  
WHERE I'D LIKE  
TO GO,  
IF YOU  
DON'T  
MIND.



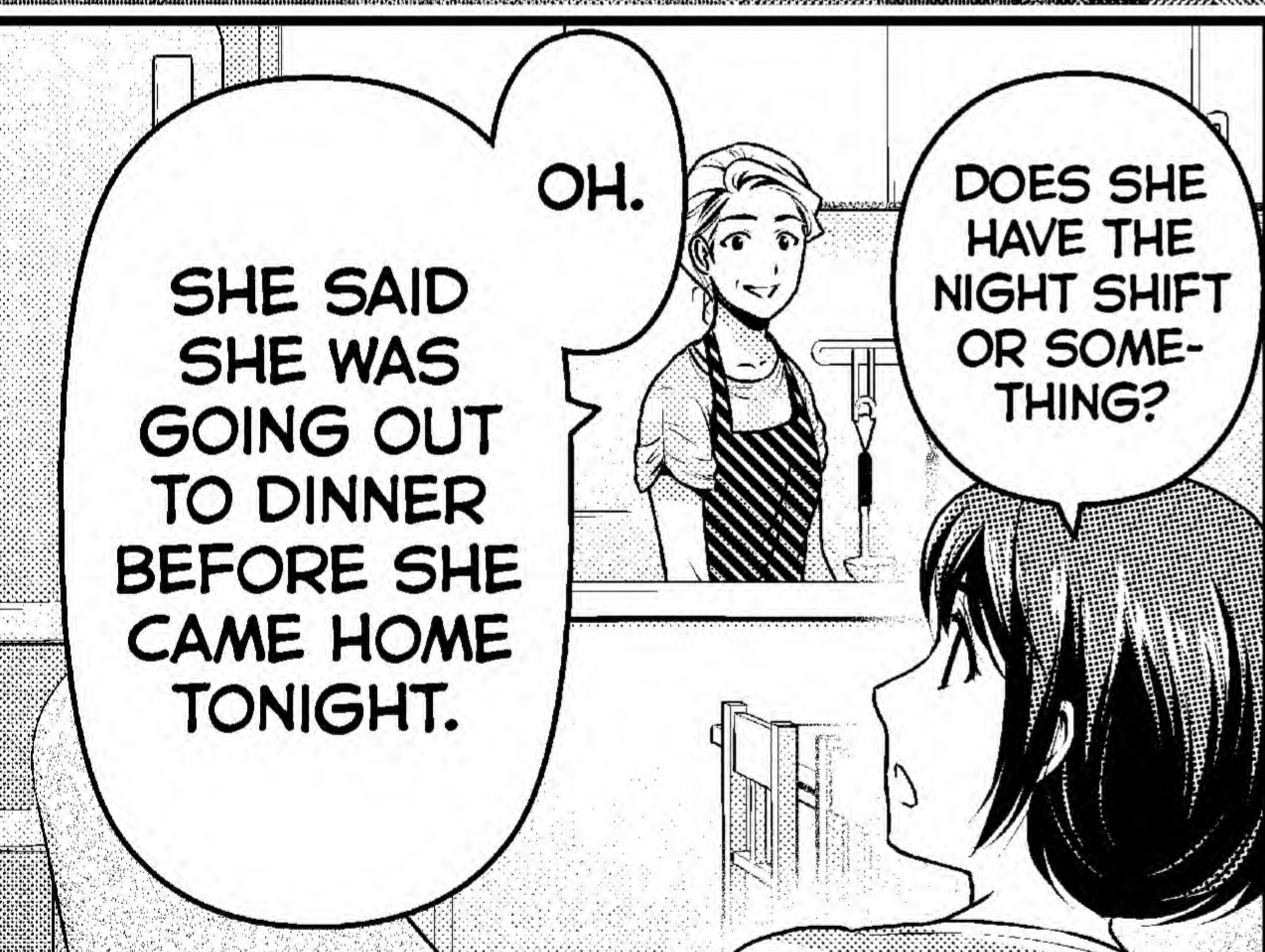
S-  
SORRY...

NO  
PROBLEM.



HEY...! UM.  
P-PLEASE PUT  
ME DOWN!  
I'M FINE!

YOU CAN'T  
WALK WELL  
IN THOSE  
SHOES,  
RIGHT? IT'S  
JUST UNTIL  
WE REACH  
THE TAXI  
STOP.



OH.  
SHE SAID  
SHE WAS  
GOING OUT  
TO DINNER  
BEFORE SHE  
CAME HOME  
TONIGHT.

DOES SHE  
HAVE THE  
NIGHT SHIFT  
OR SOME-  
THING?



I WONDER  
WHAT'S  
TAKING  
HINA-NEE.



I'M  
HOME!

DINNER?  
YOU MEAN  
WITH...





WHAT'S  
UP, MOM?



MY,  
MY,  
MY!

OH,  
DEAR!



HEY,  
HINA.

HOW WAS  
DIN—



GOOD  
EVENING.  
IT'S A  
PLEASURE  
TO MEET  
YOU.

MY NAME  
IS KENGO  
TANABE.





## CHAPTER 170: BUT THE HEART...



I WANTED  
TO THANK  
YOU FOR  
SUGGESTING  
HINA-SAN AND  
I MEET,

I  
APOLO-  
GIZE FOR  
INTRUD-  
ING SO  
LATE.

SO I  
ASKED  
HER IF I  
COULD  
COME SAY  
HI THIS  
EVENING.

MY, HOW  
POLITE!  
PLEASE,  
COME IN!







WELL,  
IF YOU  
INSIST.

ARE  
YOU  
SURE  
?

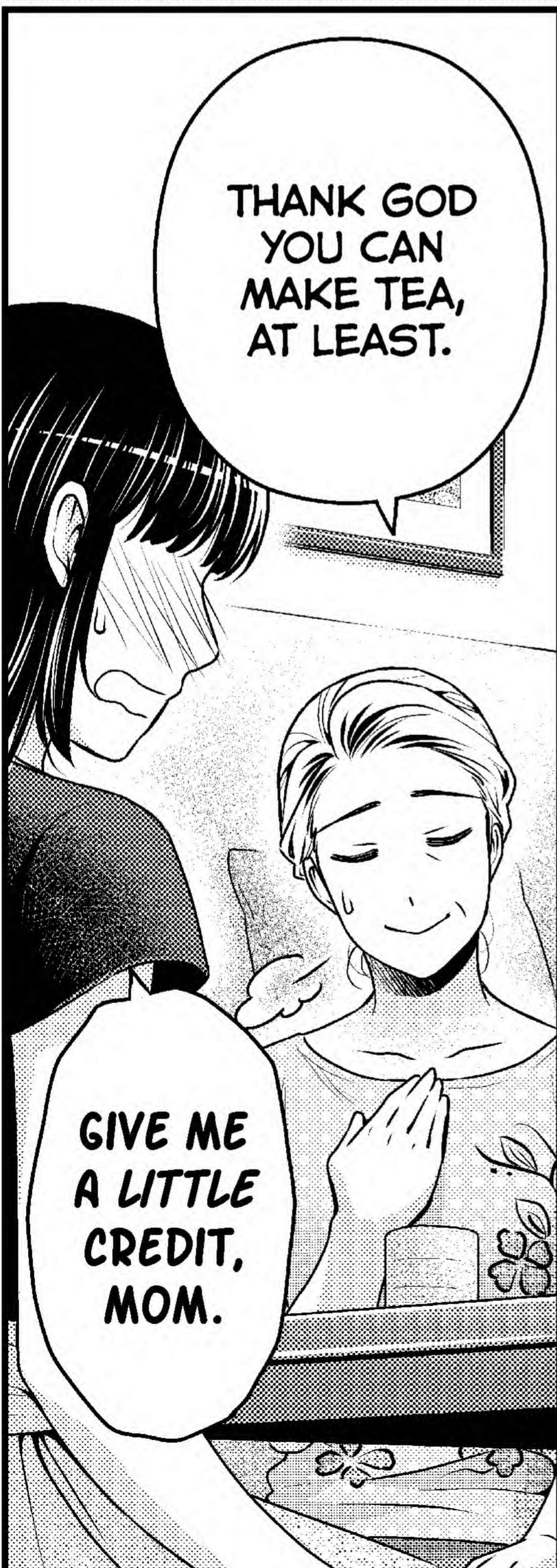
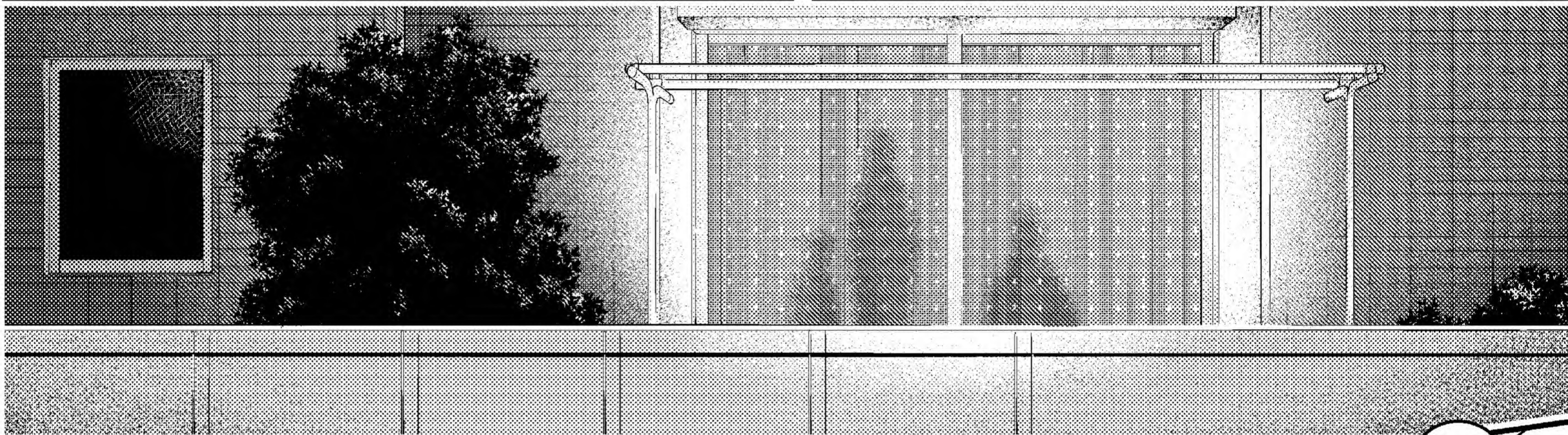


NOW,  
NOW.

DON'T  
SAY THAT.

WHY  
DON'T  
YOU  
STAY FOR  
SOME  
TEA?

DON'T  
MIND ME.  
I JUST  
THOUGHT  
I'D IN-  
TRODUCE  
MYSELF  
...



THANK GOD  
YOU CAN  
MAKE TEA,  
AT LEAST.

GIVE ME  
A LITTLE  
CREDIT,  
MOM.



THANK  
YOU.

HERE  
YOU  
ARE.





IN  
FACT,  
THE  
OTHER  
DAY,

I RECOM-  
MENDED  
SHE TRY  
OUT A  
COOKING  
CLASS  
RUN BY  
SOMEONE  
I KNOW.

OH!  
REALLY,  
HINA?



I'M  
AWARE.

MY  
DAUGHTER'S  
ALWAYS BEEN  
AWFUL AT  
COOKING.



HA,  
HA,  
HA.

I'M NOT SURE  
ABOUT THAT.  
I THINK MY  
SISTER MIGHT  
JUST BE A  
NATURAL  
DISASTER IN  
THE KITCHEN.

I'M SURE  
IT'S NOTH-  
ING A LITTLE  
HARD WORK  
CAN'T FIX!



SO I  
FIGURED  
SHE MUST  
HAVE SOME  
POTENTIAL,  
TOO.

HINA-SAN  
MENTIONED  
THAT HER  
LITTLE  
SISTER  
WORKS AS  
A CHEF,



...BUT I  
THINK NOW  
IS THE  
TIME WHEN  
I SHOULD  
WORK TO-  
WARDS MY  
DREAM.

DOWN THE  
ROAD, I PLAN  
TO CUT DOWN  
ON MY WORK  
HOURS TO  
GIVE MYSELF  
SOME MORE  
FREE TIME...

YOUR  
DREAM  
?



IT'S  
REALLY  
NOT  
ANYTHING  
SPECIAL.

I SUPPOSE  
THAT'S  
OVERSTAT-  
ING IT A BIT.

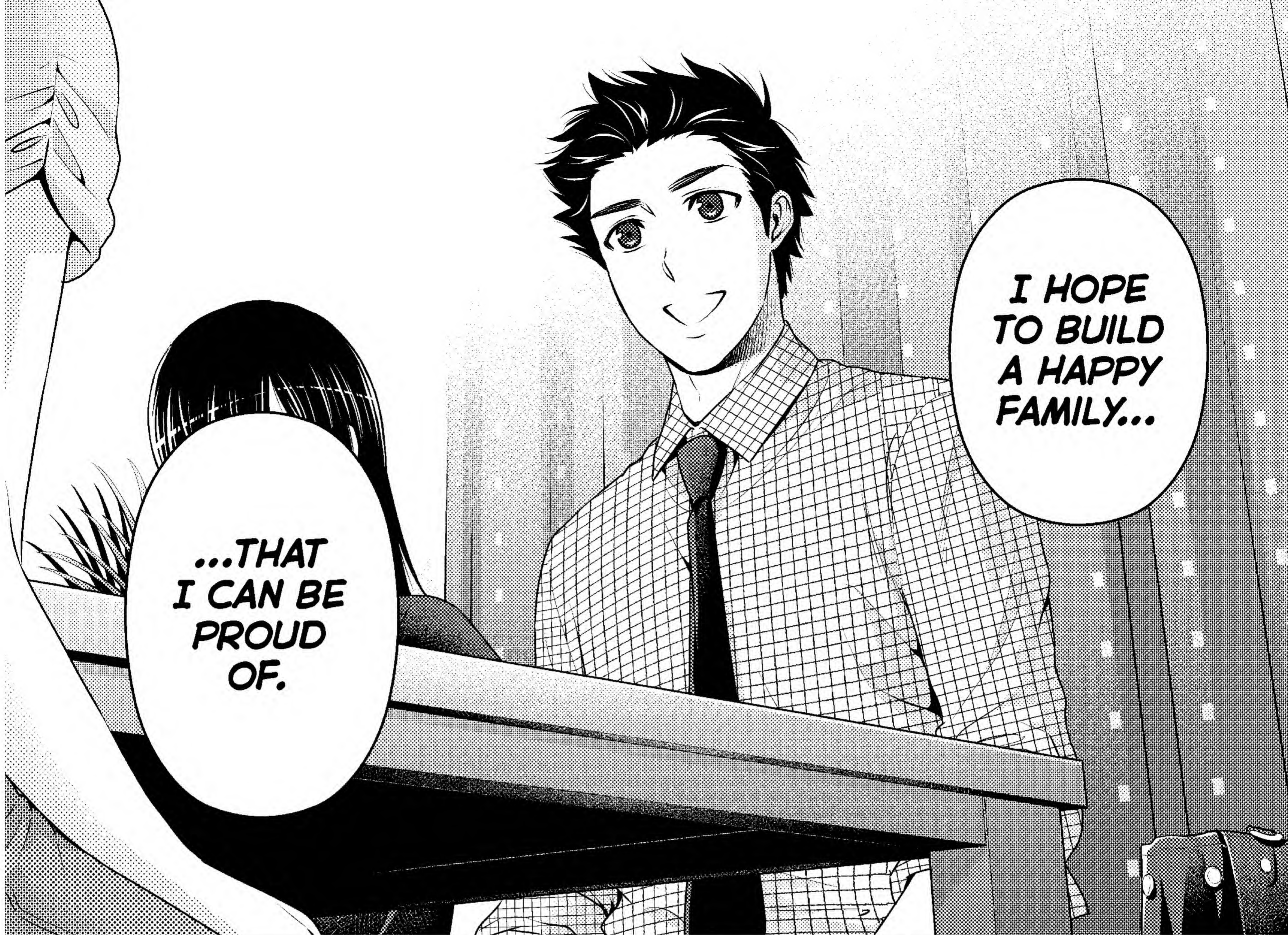


YOU MUST  
BE A BUSY  
MAN.

IF I'M NOT  
MISTAKEN,  
DON'T YOU  
WORK AT A  
TRADE FIRM,  
KENGO-  
SAN?

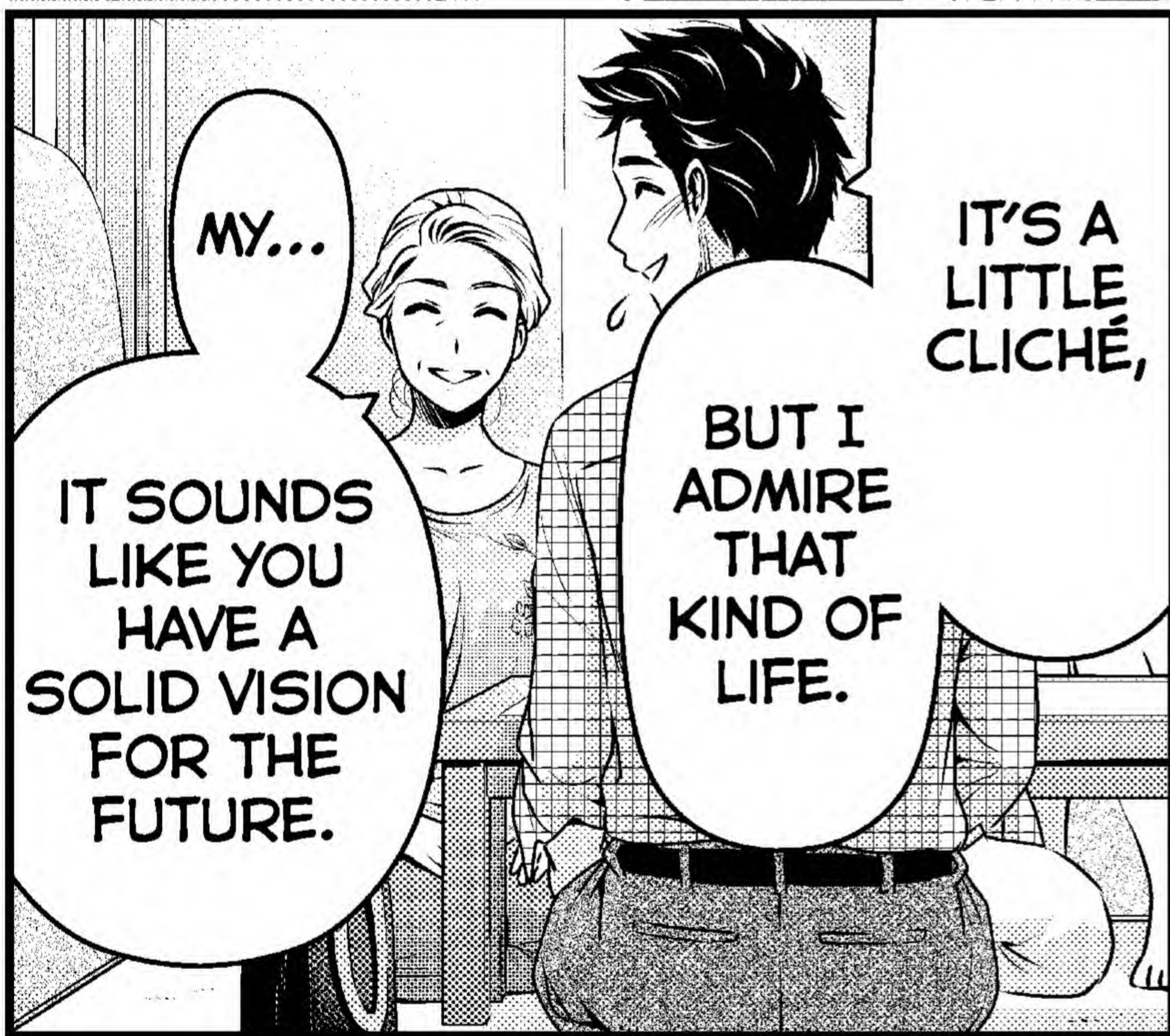
I SUP-  
POSE.





...THAT  
I CAN BE  
PROUD  
OF.

I HOPE  
TO BUILD  
A HAPPY  
FAMILY...



MY...

IT SOUNDS  
LIKE YOU  
HAVE A  
SOLID VISION  
FOR THE  
FUTURE.

IT'S A  
LITTLE  
CLICHÉ,

BUT I  
ADMIRE  
THAT  
KIND OF  
LIFE.



THAT  
SOUNDS  
WONDER-  
FUL.

RIGHT,  
HINA?



...WITH A  
PRETTY WIFE  
TO HELP HOLD  
DOWN THE  
FORT AND LOOK  
AFTER OUR  
CHILDREN.  
A DOG MIGHT  
BE NICE, TOO.

I'D LIKE  
TO BUY  
A SMALL  
HOME  
IN THE  
SUBURBS  
...

ON WEEKENDS,  
WE COULD  
GO ON FAMILY  
OUTINGS, OR  
HAVE FRIENDS  
OVER FOR  
BARBEQUES  
AND SUCH.







THEN MAYBE  
HINA-CHAN  
WILL BE THAT  
PRETTY WIFE  
SOMEDAY.

OH,  
AKIHITO-  
SAN! LET'S  
NOT BE  
HASTY!



UM.

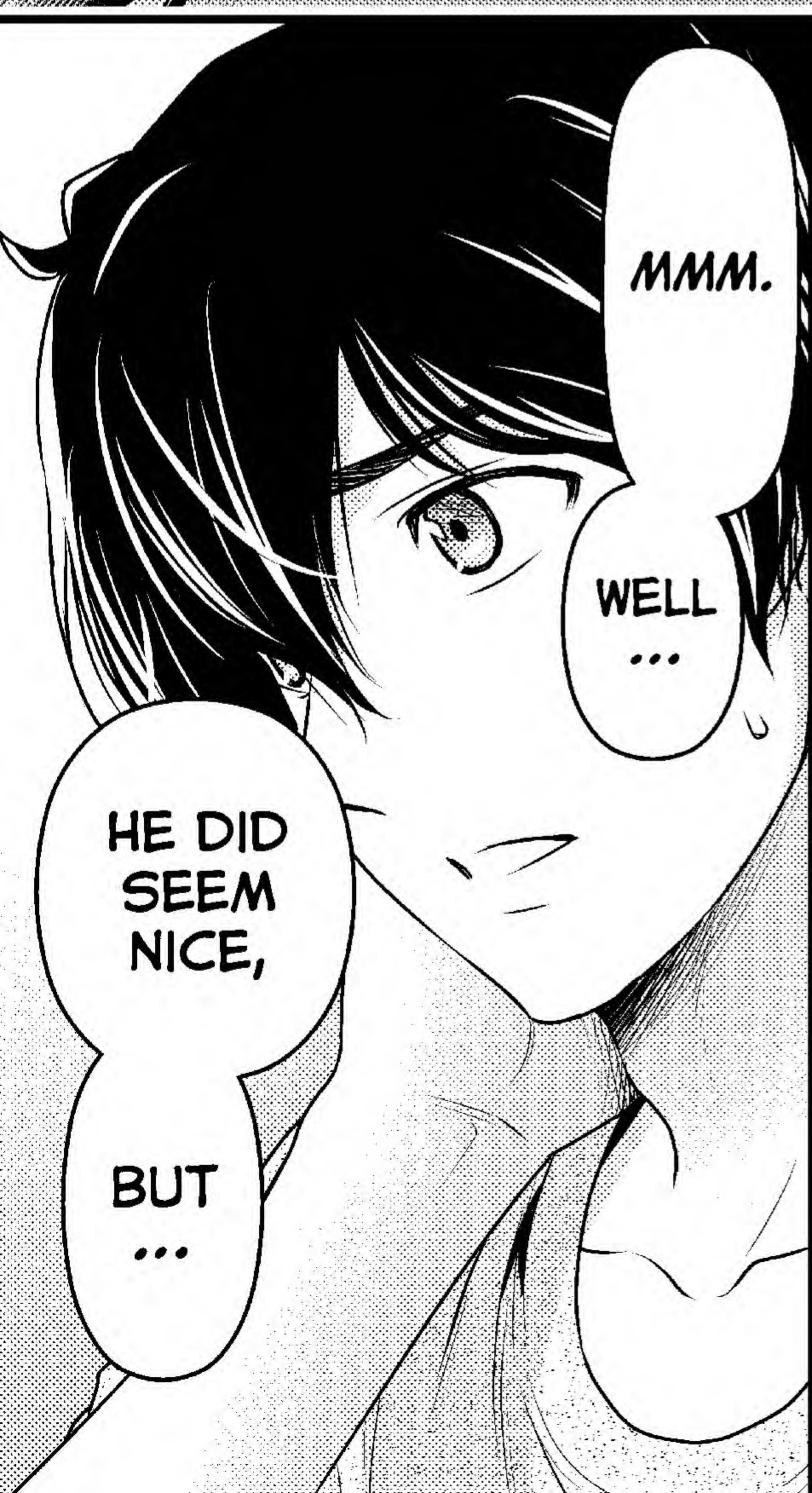
YEAH.



DON'T BE.  
PLEASE  
DROP BY  
AGAIN  
SOMETIME.

I'M SORRY  
FOR  
STAYING  
SO LATE.

*HUH...?*



MMM.

WELL  
...

HE DID  
SEEM  
NICE,

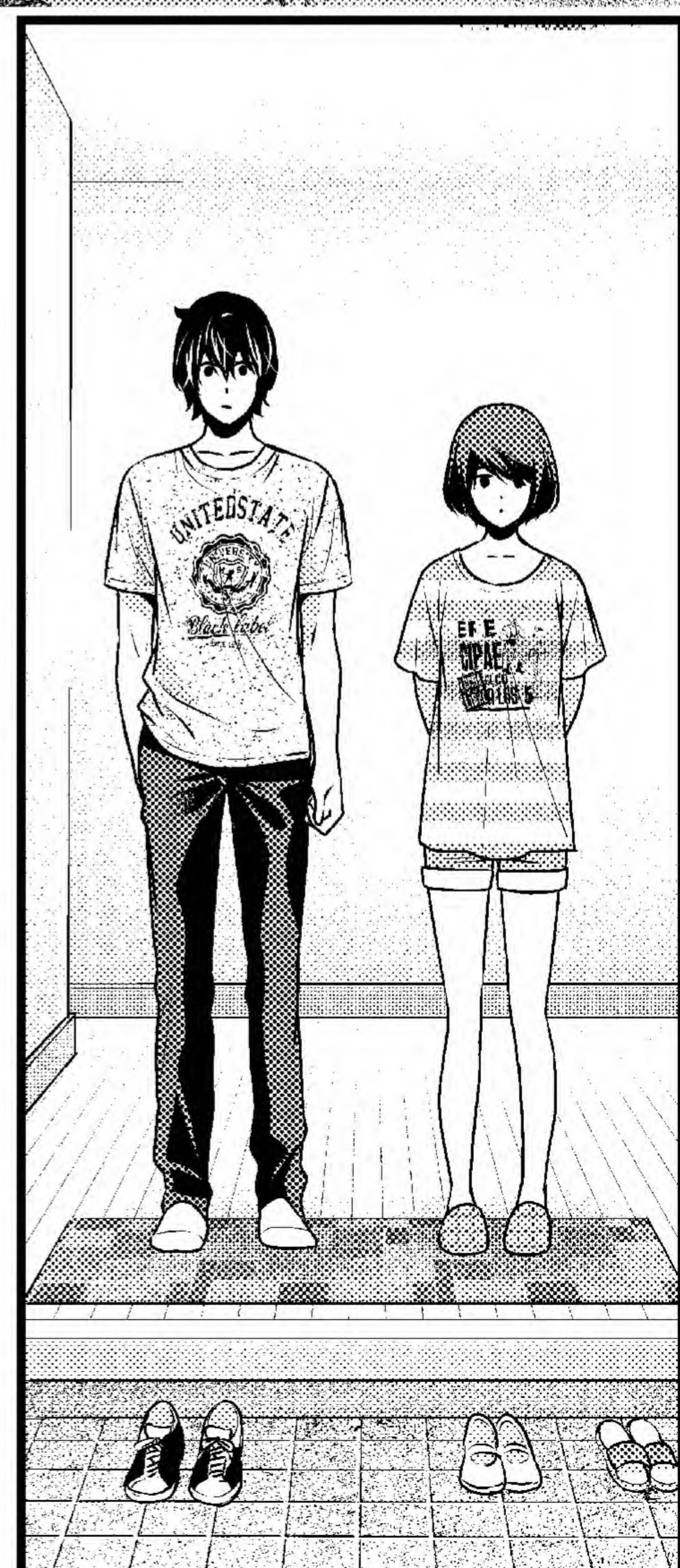
BUT  
...



BUT HE  
SEEMED  
NICE, I  
GUESS.

UNLIKE YOU,  
HE KINDA  
CAME OFF  
AS A PEPPY  
BALL OF  
SUNSHINE  
IN A SUIT  
AND TIE,

WHAT,  
AM I  
A RAIN  
CLOUD,  
THEN?





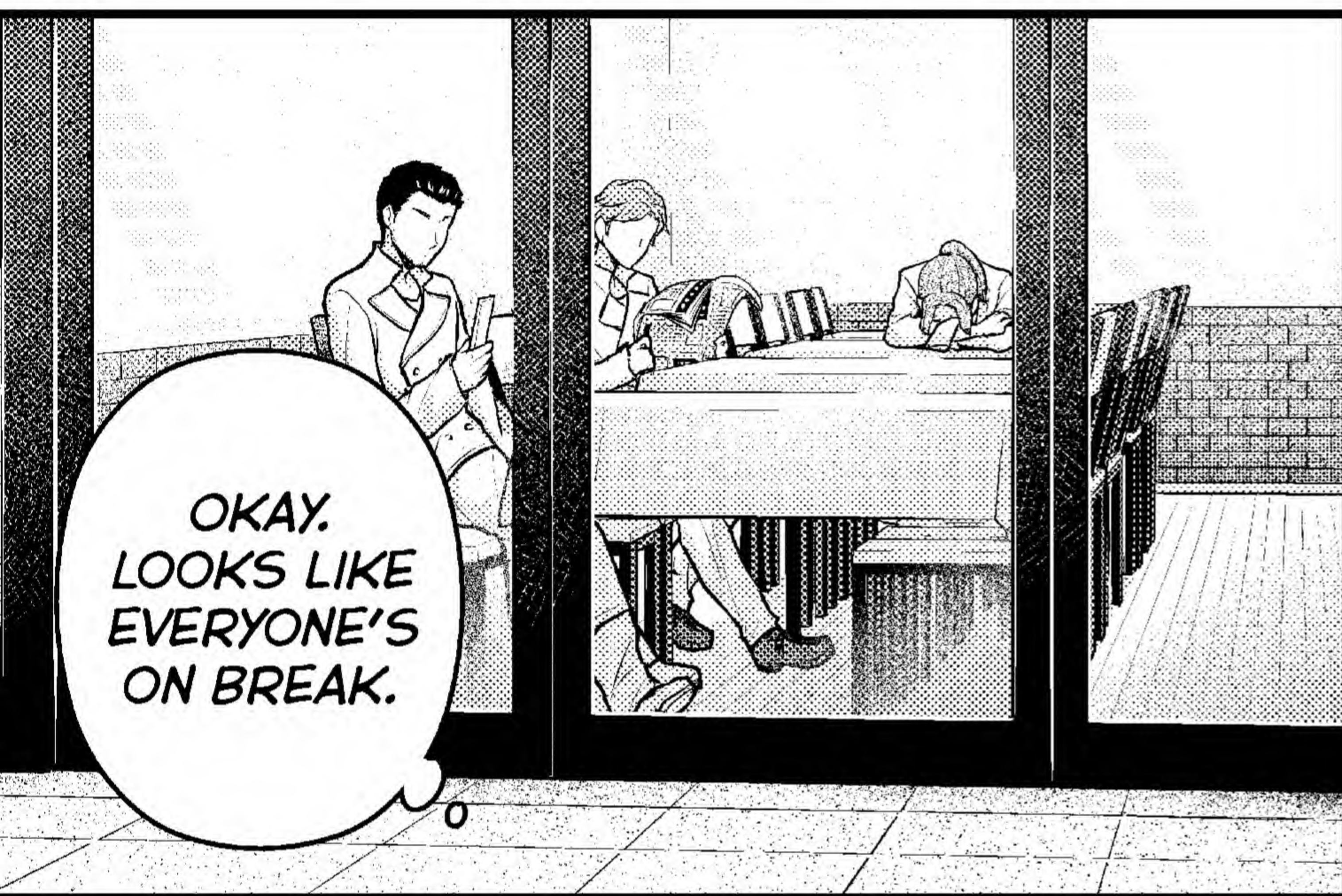






I'LL PUT  
A SCAR  
SHEET OVER  
THE WOUND.  
MAKE SURE  
YOU KEEP  
THE AREA  
CLEAN.

YOU WERE  
LUCKY THAT  
YOU DIDN'T  
INJURE ANY  
NERVES.



OKAY.  
LOOKS LIKE  
EVERYONE'S  
ON BREAK.



I DON'T  
WANNA  
WORRY THE  
REST OF  
THE CREW.

I ALREADY  
TOLD DAD,  
SO I'LL JUST  
GRAB THE  
KNIFE AND  
GO HOME.

た  
た TAP  
っ TAP



I'LL SAY HI  
WHEN I GO  
BACK TO  
WORK FOR  
REAL.



SWIF  
そ  
お  
...

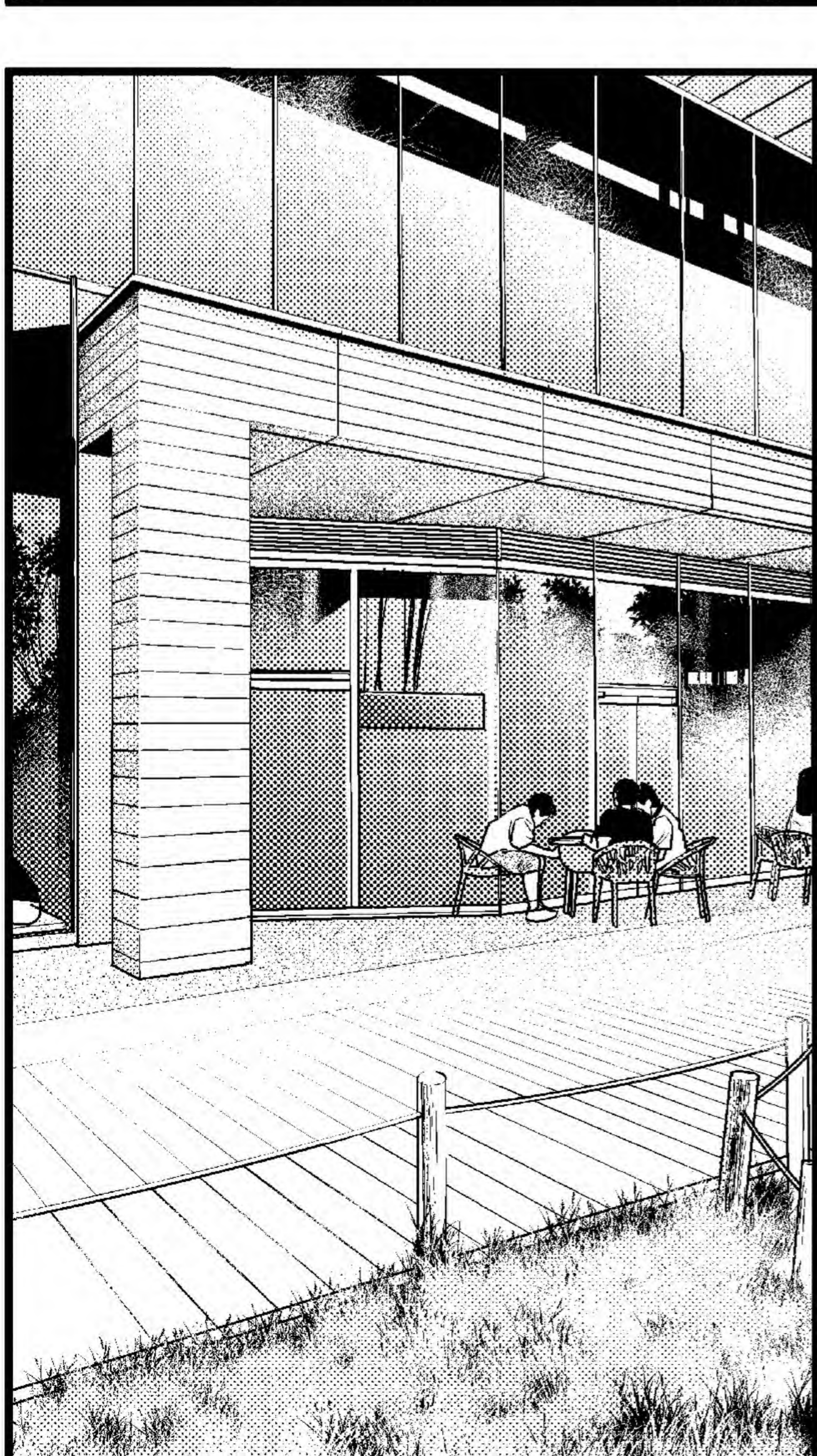




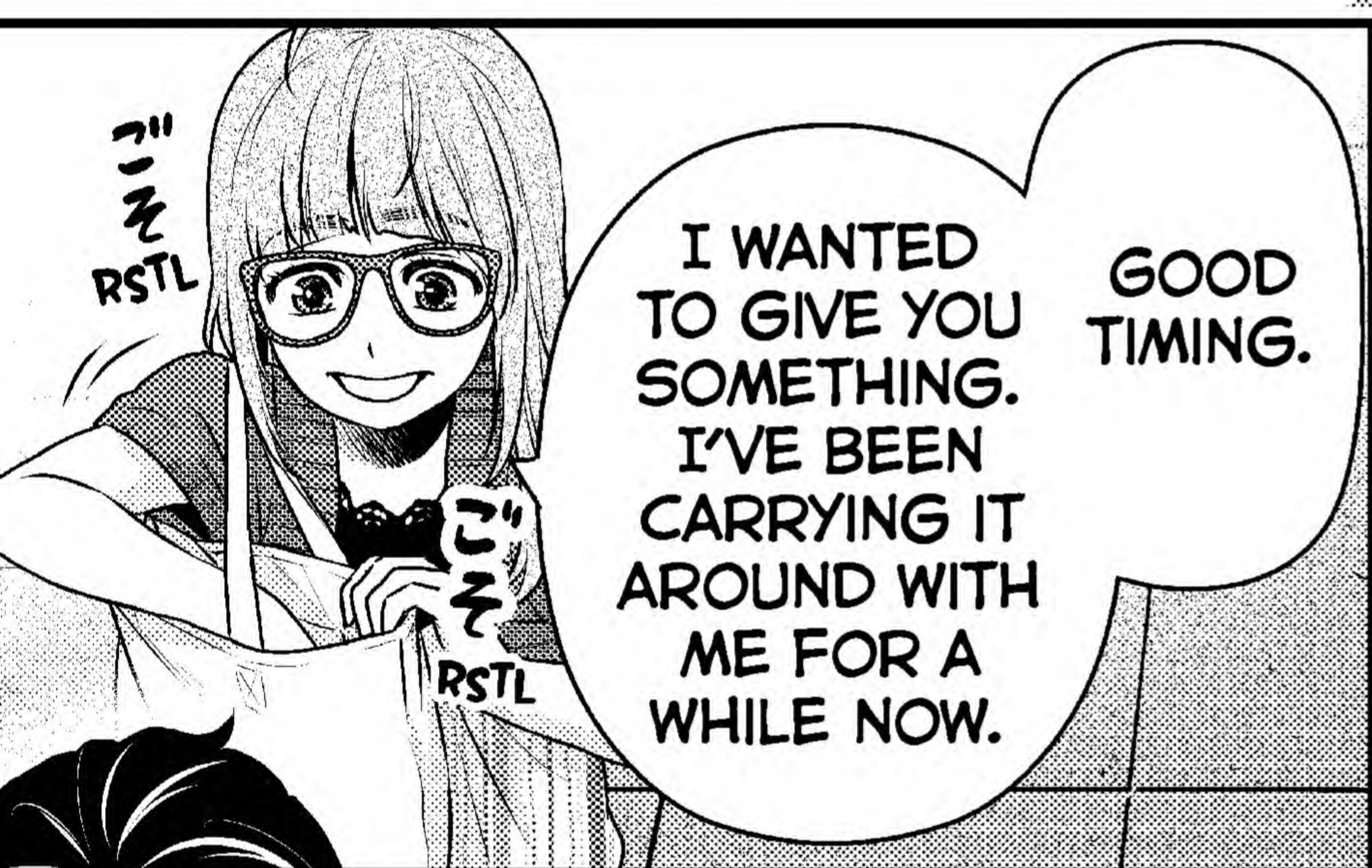




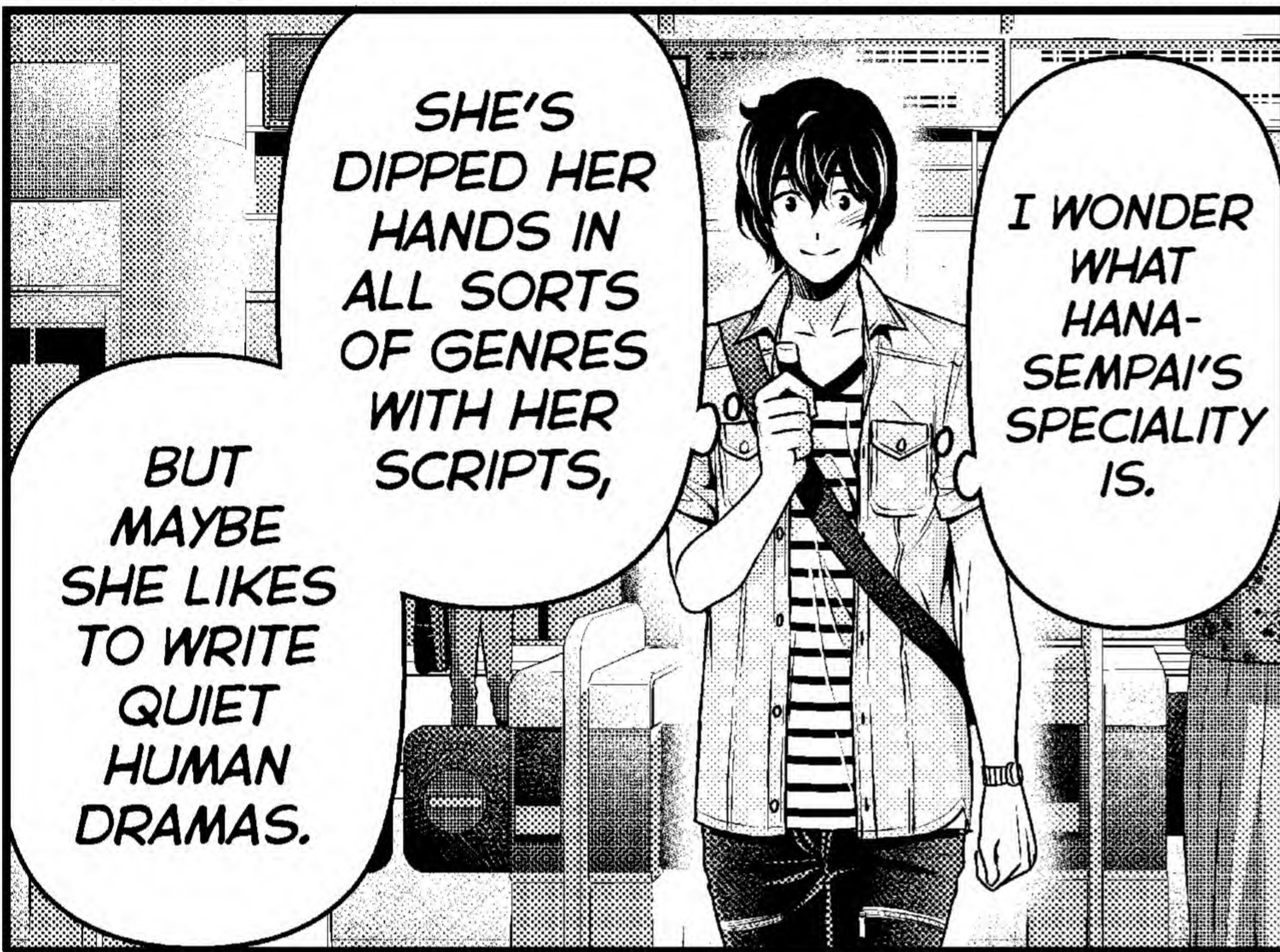












SHE'S  
DIPPED HER  
HANDS IN  
ALL SORTS  
OF GENRES  
WITH HER  
SCRIPTS,

BUT  
MAYBE  
SHE LIKES  
TO WRITE  
QUIET  
HUMAN  
DRAMAS.

I WONDER  
WHAT  
HANA-  
SEMPAI'S  
SPECIALITY  
IS.



MAN...

I CAN'T  
WAIT TO  
READ  
THEM!



GOING  
HOME?

HEY!



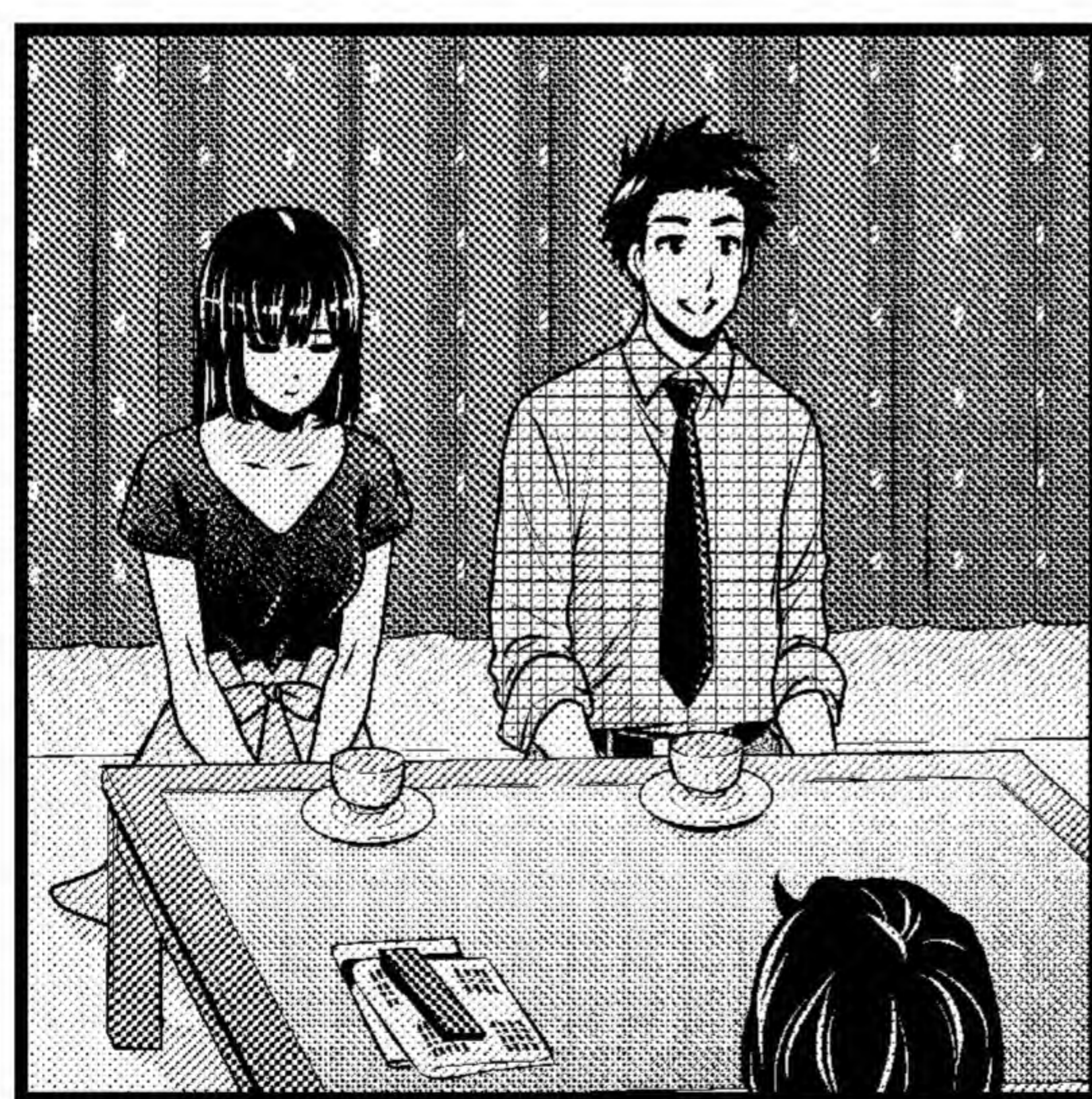
MY  
LAPTOP'S  
AT THE  
APART-  
MENT.

OH,  
CRAP...

WONDER  
IF I CAN  
BORROW  
RUI'S OR  
HINA-  
NEE'S.

NATSUO-  
KUN?

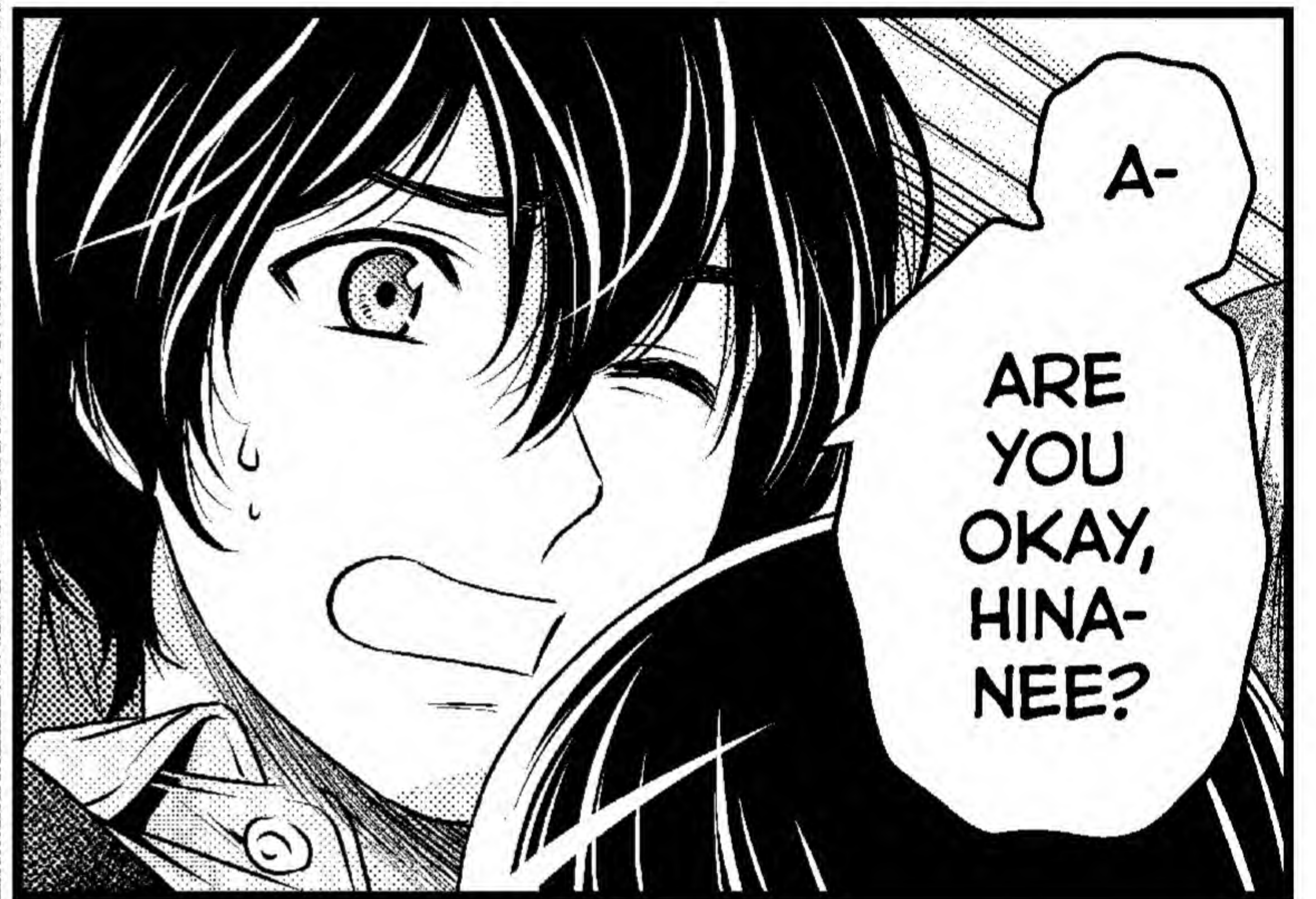
















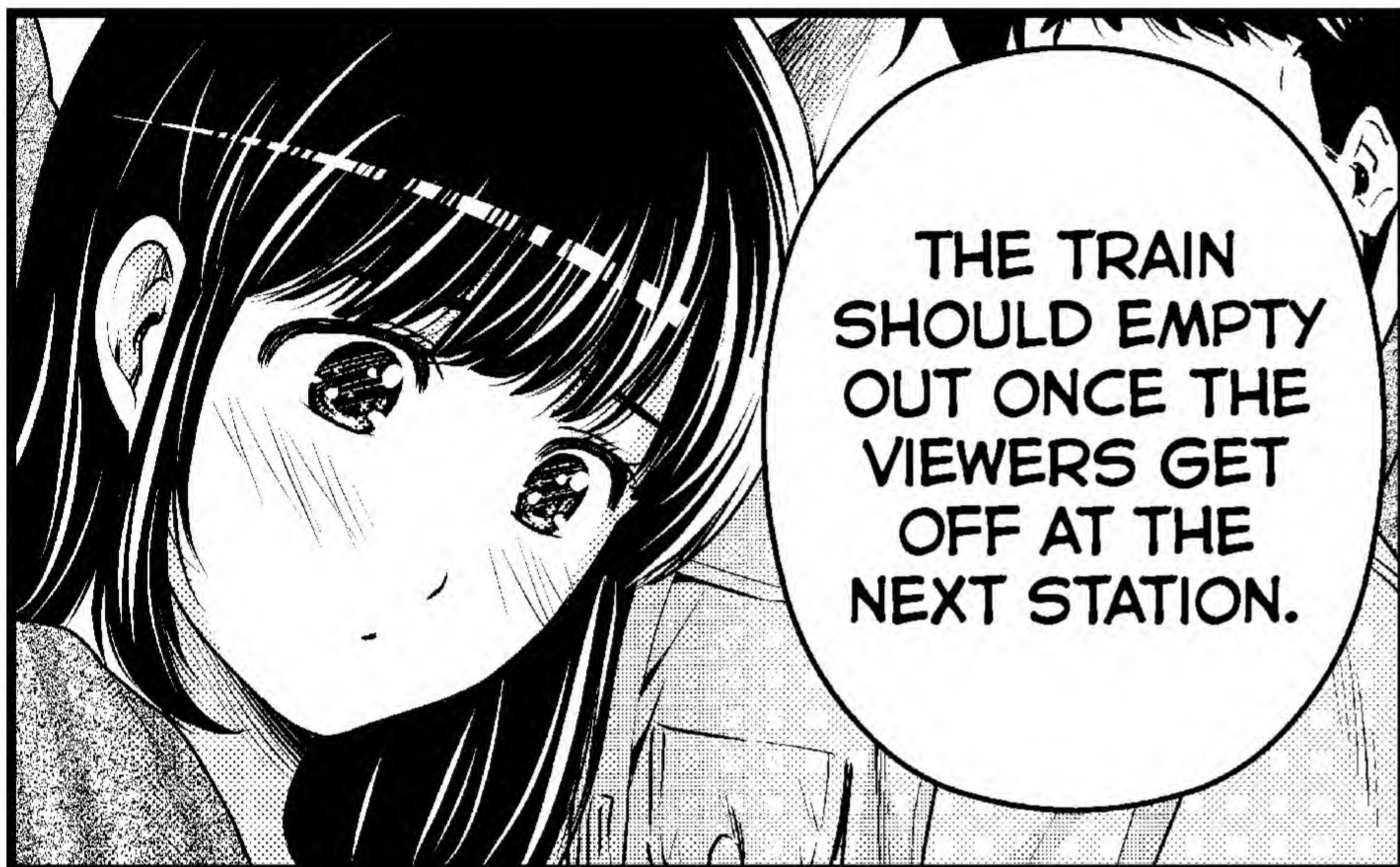
OHH,  
THAT.

I SAW  
POSTERS  
FOR IT  
IN THE  
SHOPPING  
ARCADE,  
TOO.

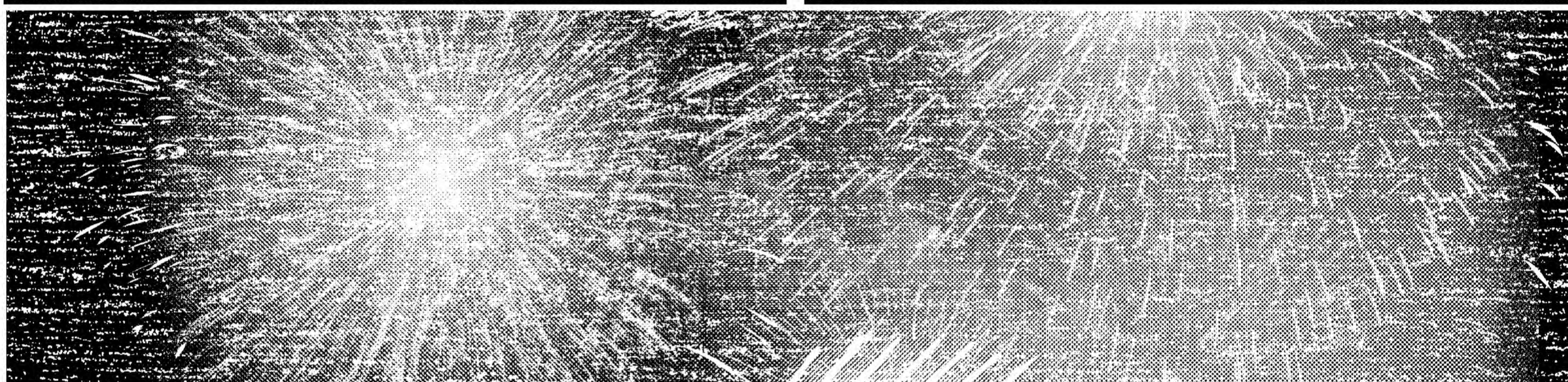
LOOK,  
HINA-NEE.  
I THINK THE  
SUMIREGAWA  
FIREWORKS  
DISPLAY IS  
TONIGHT.



OH...



THE TRAIN  
SHOULD EMPTY  
OUT ONCE THE  
VIEWERS GET  
OFF AT THE  
NEXT STATION.



PHEW.

I COULD  
BARELY  
BREATHE  
PACKED IN  
WITH ALL  
THOSE  
PEOP-

THAT'S  
MUCH  
BETTER,  
HUH?



KINJO.

KINJO.





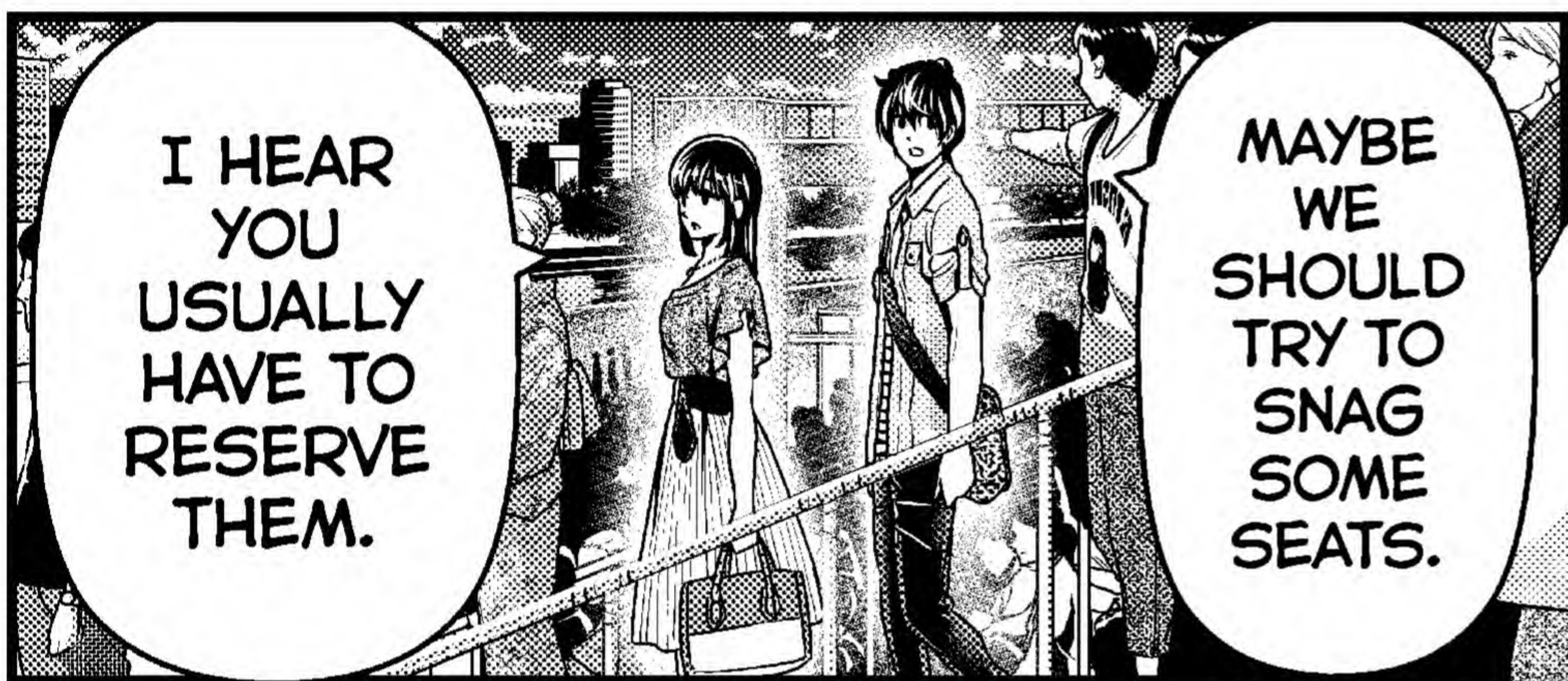
























I WON'T!  
I'M NOT  
WEARING  
A YUKATA  
TODAY.

NYEH  
^"  
~

JUST  
DON'T  
DROP  
YOUR  
PHONE  
IN AGAIN,  
OKAY?



YOU  
BET I  
DID.

UH, OH.  
YOU  
FOUND  
IT.

ONE  
ROUND,  
SIR!



WHAT'D  
I JUST  
SAY?!

GYAAAH!

SPLASH



IT FELL  
OUT OF MY  
SLEEVE  
LAST TI-



HUH  
?

JUST PUT  
IT IN MY  
BAG. YOU  
SHOULD  
PLAY, TOO,  
NATSUO-  
KUN!

I'LL  
HOLD  
YOUR  
BEER  
AND  
STUFF.



HUH...?  
BUT AREN'T  
YOU A  
MASTER  
AT THIS?

LET'S  
HAVE A  
LITTLE  
COMPETI-  
TION.

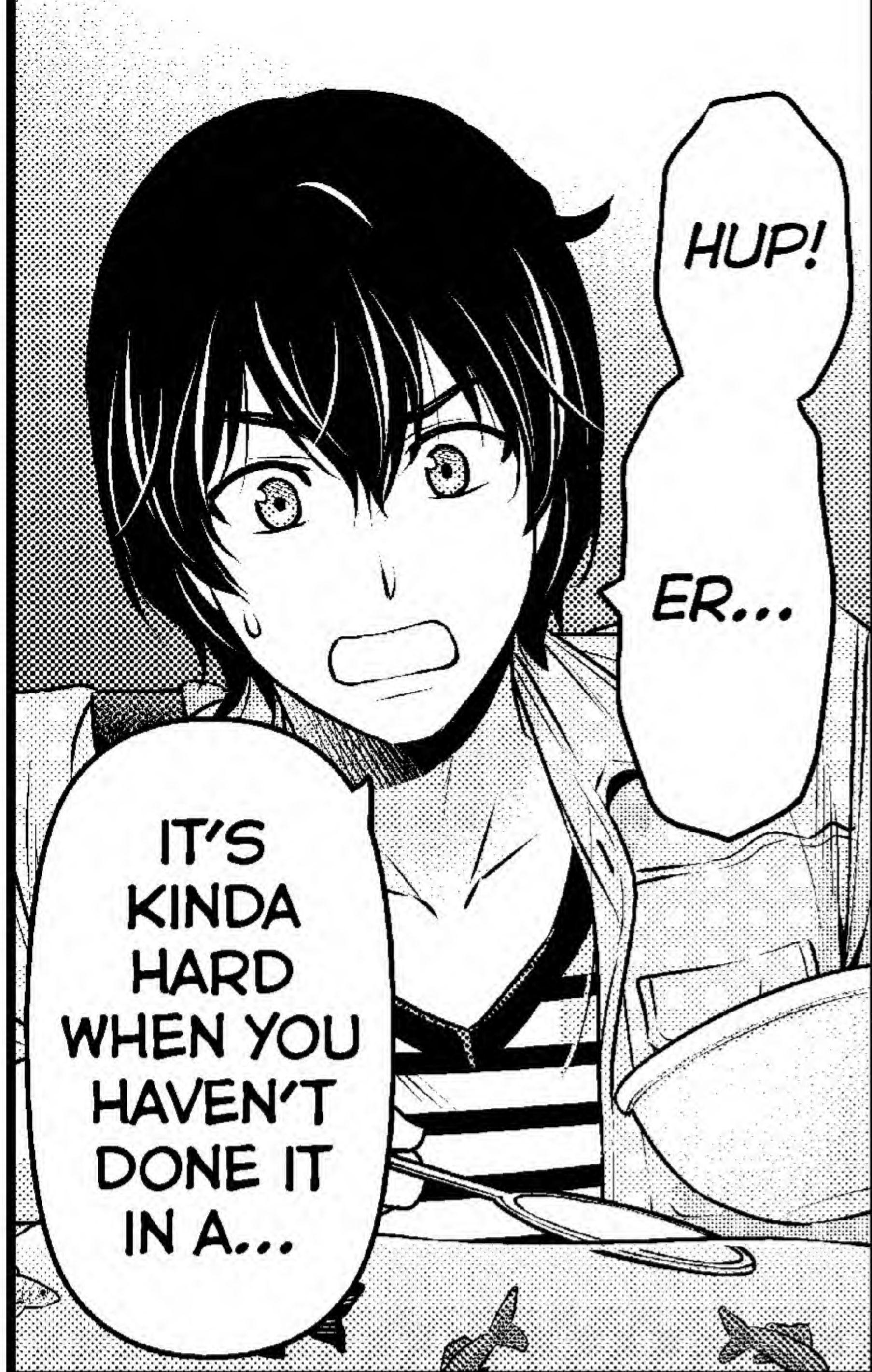


THANK  
GOD FOR  
TECHNO-  
LOGICAL  
ADVANCE-  
MENTS,  
HUH?

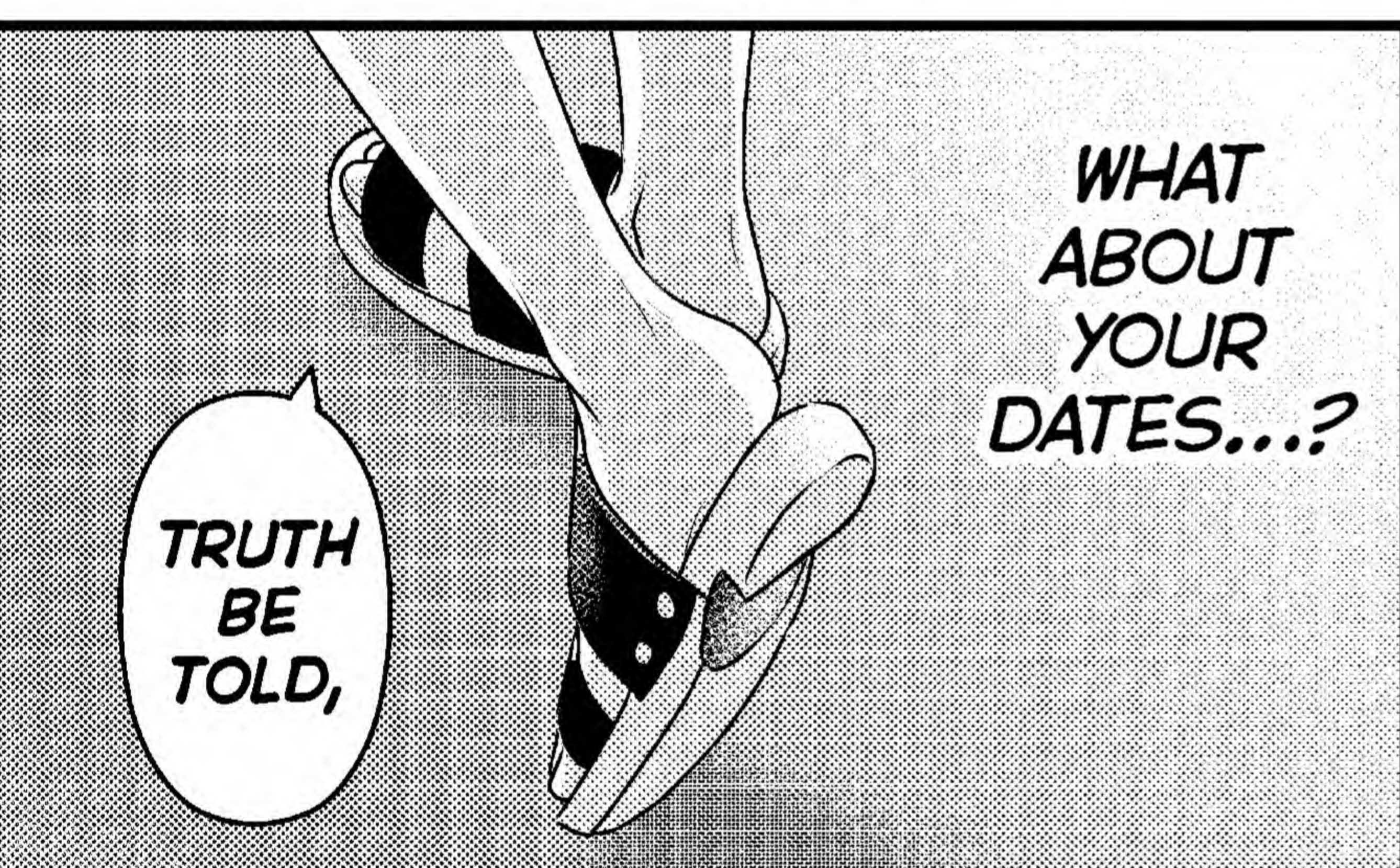
LUCKILY,  
MY NEW  
ONE'S  
WATERPROOF.

THAT FACE IS  
KINDA  
IRRITATING...





















HE'S GENERALLY POSITIVE AND A GOOD PERSON, LIKE YOU SAID.

BUT IT'S JUST KIND OF EXHAUSTING THE WAY HE KEEPS REACHING OUT BEFORE I HAVE A CHANCE TO MAKE A MOVE, Y'KNOW?



IT'S LIKE...

...MY FEELINGS HAVEN'T REALLY CAUGHT UP YET.



I SAID NO AT FIRST.

WHEN HE ASKED TO COME OVER THE OTHER DAY,

I MEAN, WE'RE NOT EVEN OFFICIALLY DATING OR ANYTHING.



BUT ...

...I'M SURE I ONLY AGREED BECAUSE I THOUGHT HE'D BE UPSTAIRS WRITING.



BUT HE JUST KEPT INSISTING ...

NATSUO-KUN'S AT THE HOUSE, TOO.

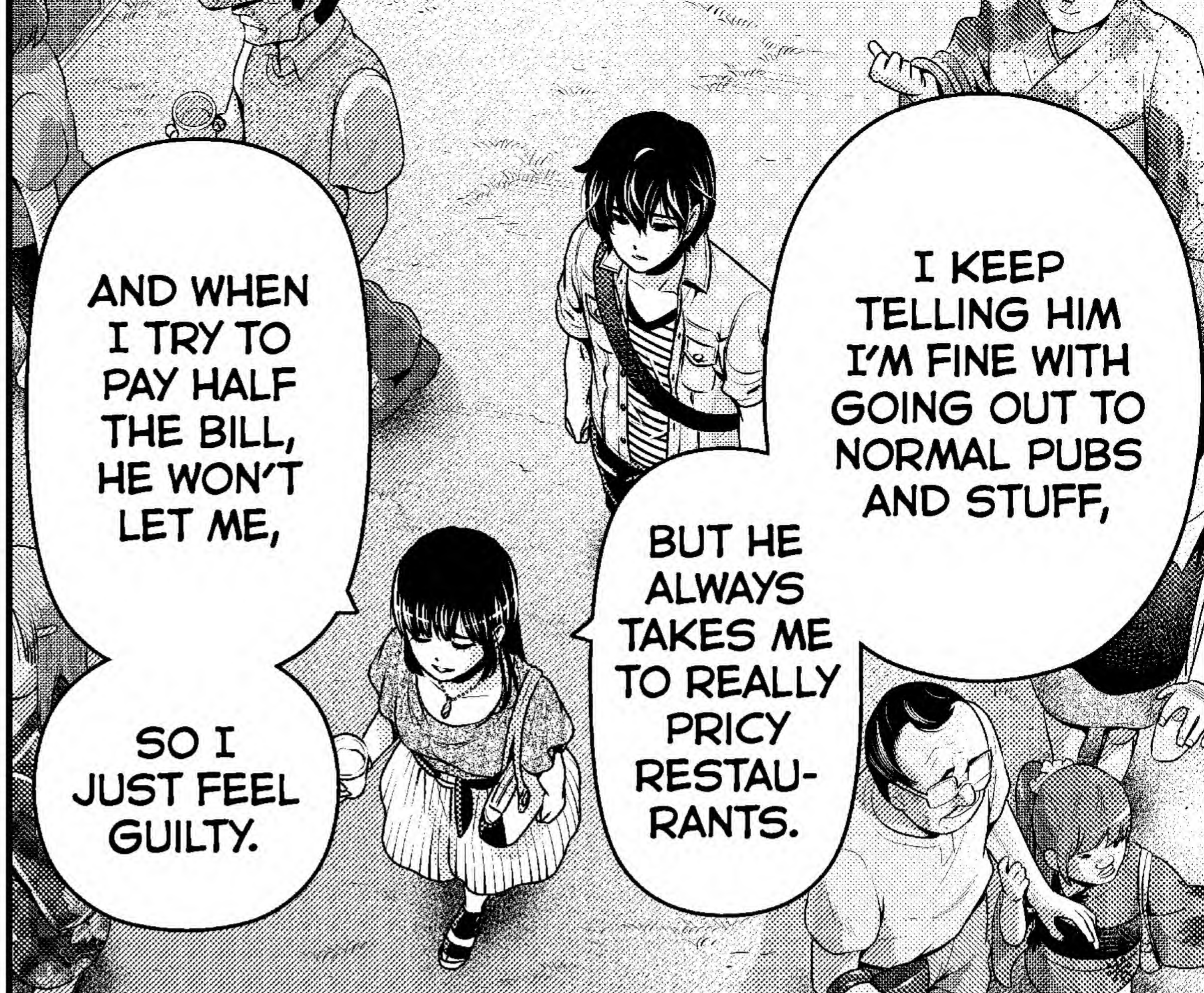




THAT SAID ...

WELL,

...



AND WHEN I TRY TO PAY HALF THE BILL, HE WON'T LET ME,

SO I JUST FEEL GUILTY.

BUT HE ALWAYS TAKES ME TO REALLY PRICY RESTAURANTS.

I KEEP TELLING HIM I'M FINE WITH GOING OUT TO NORMAL PUBS AND STUFF,



AND EVERYONE SEEMS TO THINK HE'S A GOOD PERSON.

I THINK SHE REALLY LIKES TANABE-SAN.

I MEAN, DID YOU SEE HOW HAPPY MY MOM WAS?



IT'D PROBABLY BE FOR THE BEST IF WE JUST GET MARRIED.

HONESTLY,



SCREW THAT.



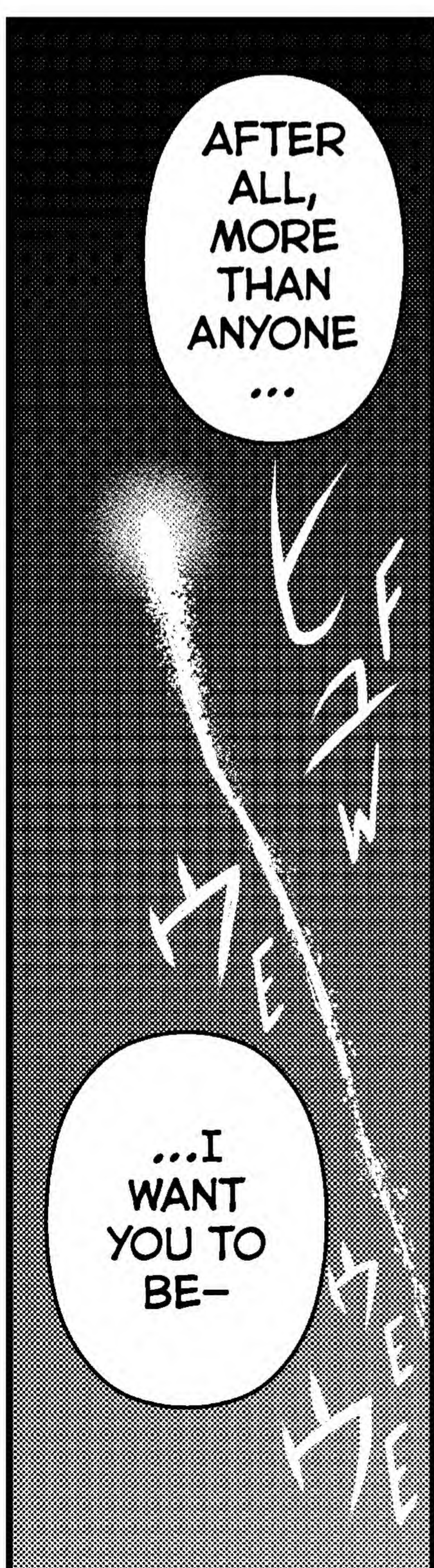
...I PROBABLY JUST HAVE TO GET USED TO IT.





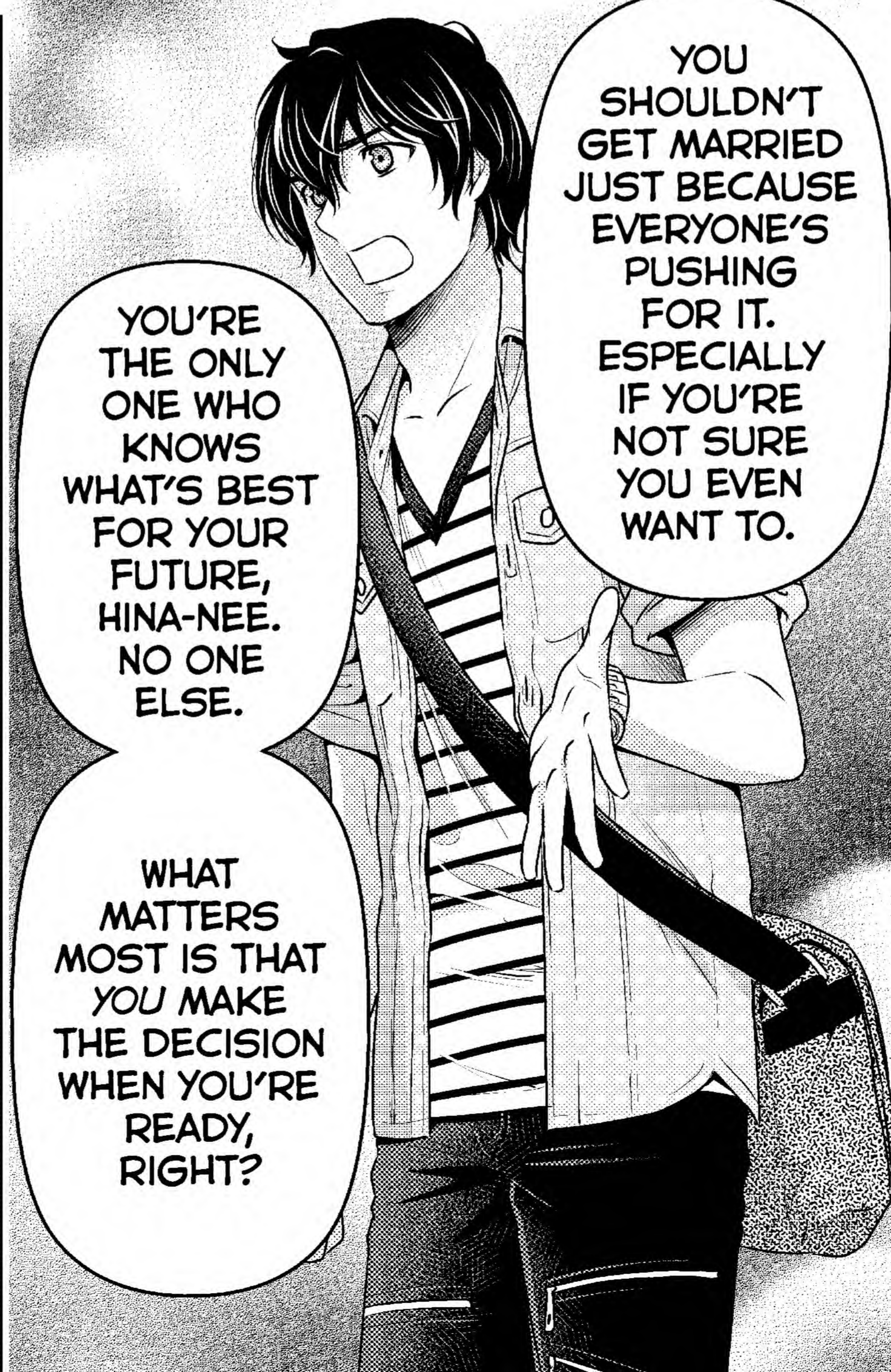
...THEN I'M  
A HUNDRED  
PERCENT  
AGAINST IT.

IF YOU'RE  
GONNA GET  
MARRIED  
WITH THAT  
KIND OF  
ATTITUDE  
...



AFTER  
ALL,  
MORE  
THAN  
ANYONE  
...

...I  
WANT  
YOU TO  
BE-



YOU'RE  
THE ONLY  
ONE WHO  
KNOWS  
WHAT'S BEST  
FOR YOUR  
FUTURE,  
HINA-NEE.  
NO ONE  
ELSE.

WHAT  
MATTERS  
MOST IS THAT  
YOU MAKE  
THE DECISION  
WHEN YOU'RE  
READY,  
RIGHT?

YOU  
SHOULDN'T  
GET MARRIED  
JUST BECAUSE  
EVERYONE'S  
PUSHING  
FOR IT.  
ESPECIALLY  
IF YOU'RE  
NOT SURE  
YOU EVEN  
WANT TO.



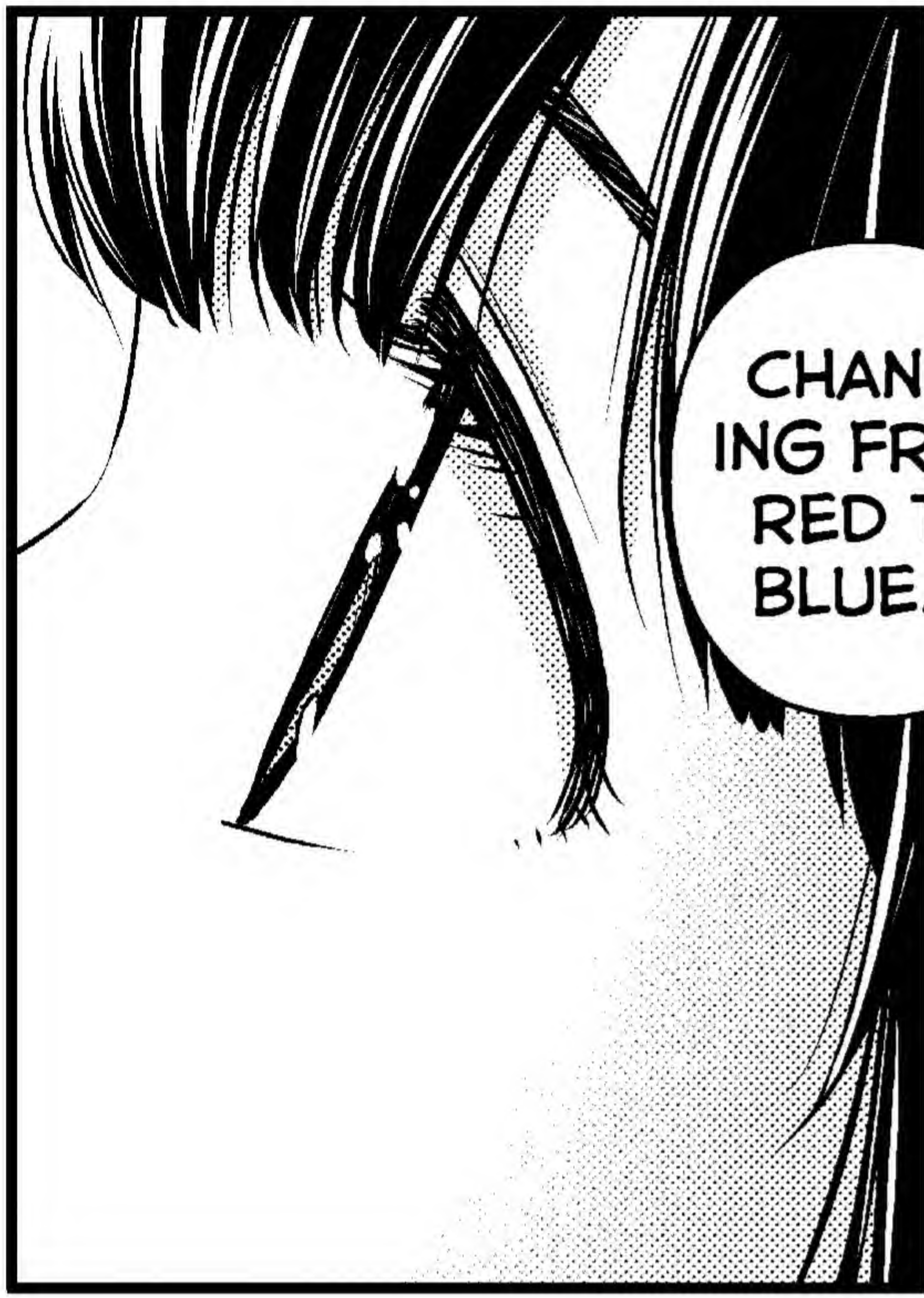
HUH  
...?

I MEAN,  
THAT'S  
JUST RIDICU-  
LOUS.





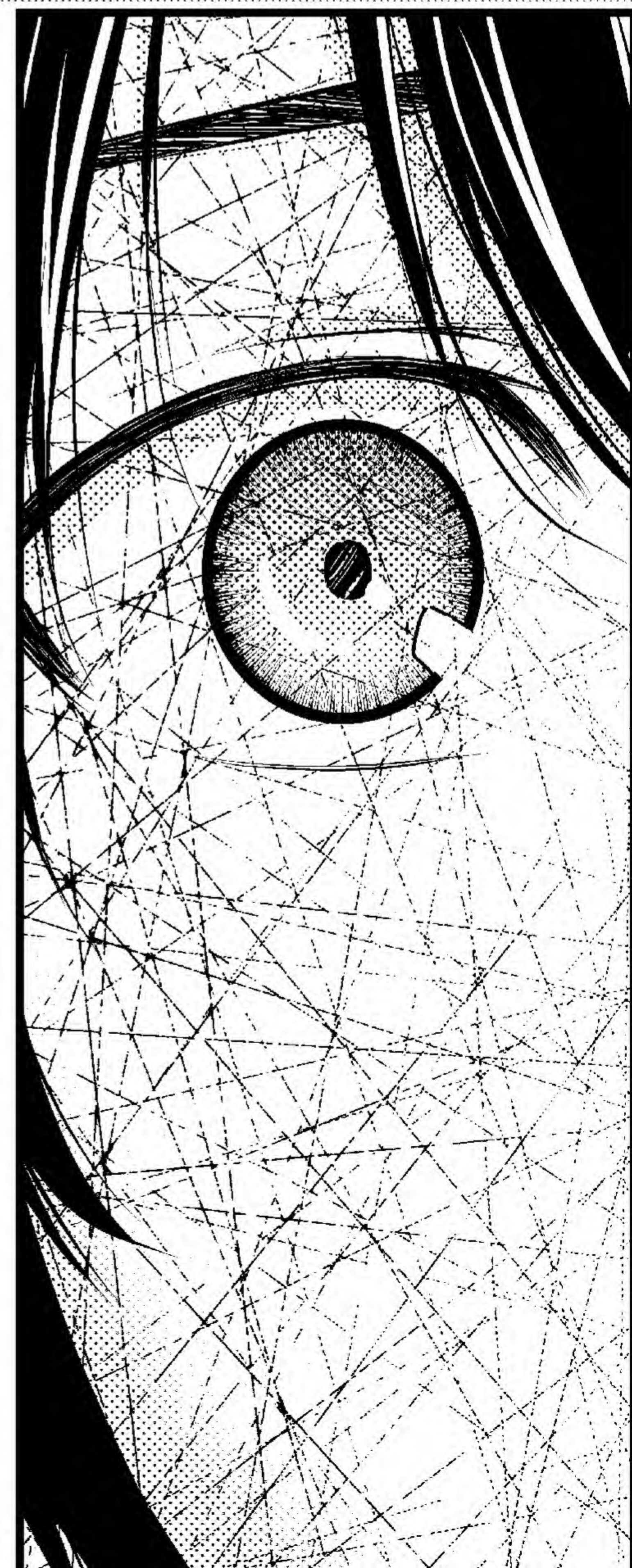
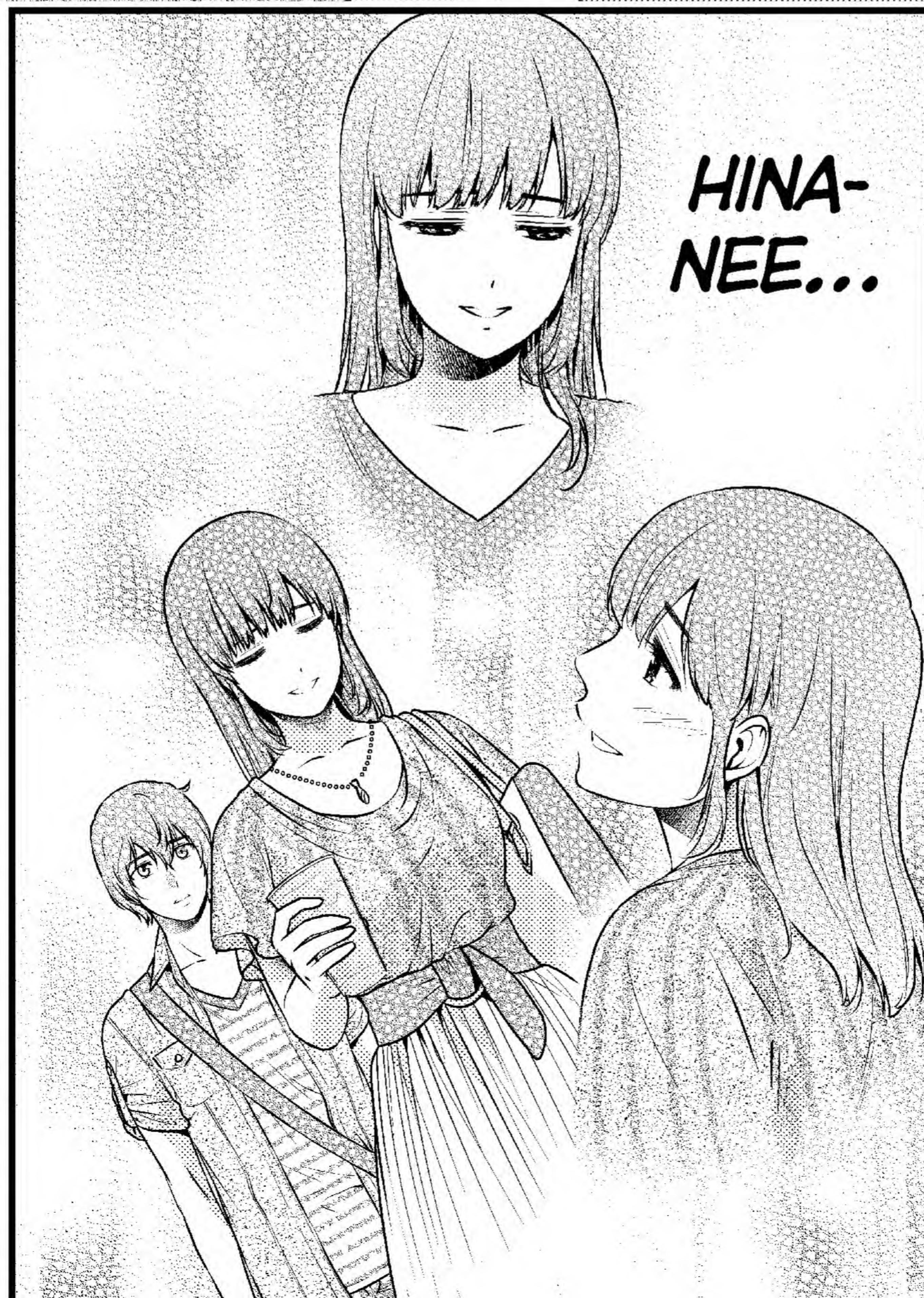




CHANG-  
ING FROM  
RED TO  
BLUE...



















ALL  
RIGHT,  
ALL  
RIGHT!

WHAT A  
HEARTLESS  
LITTLE  
BROTHER!  
AND HERE  
I AM,  
WORRYING  
MYSELF  
SICK...



WHAT,  
IS THAT  
IT?

HUH  
?



GREAT.



I'M  
SORRY,  
RUI.



JUST  
FOR  
NOW,

LET ME  
STAY LIKE  
THIS.

FOR-  
GIVE  
ME.



# CHAPTER 172: A NEW CHALLENGE



OH!

THAT'S IT!

23 news

Sumiregawa Fireworks Display  
Flowers Light the Night Sky

SPECTATORS GATHERED IN DROVES TO ENJOY THE FESTIVITIES...

THIS YEAR'S TIME-HONORED SUMIREGAWA FIREWORKS DISPLAY WAS HELD ON THE NORTH END THIS EVENING.

ER...

S-SORRY.

I'D HAVE GONE IF YOU'D CALLED ME, Y'KNOW.

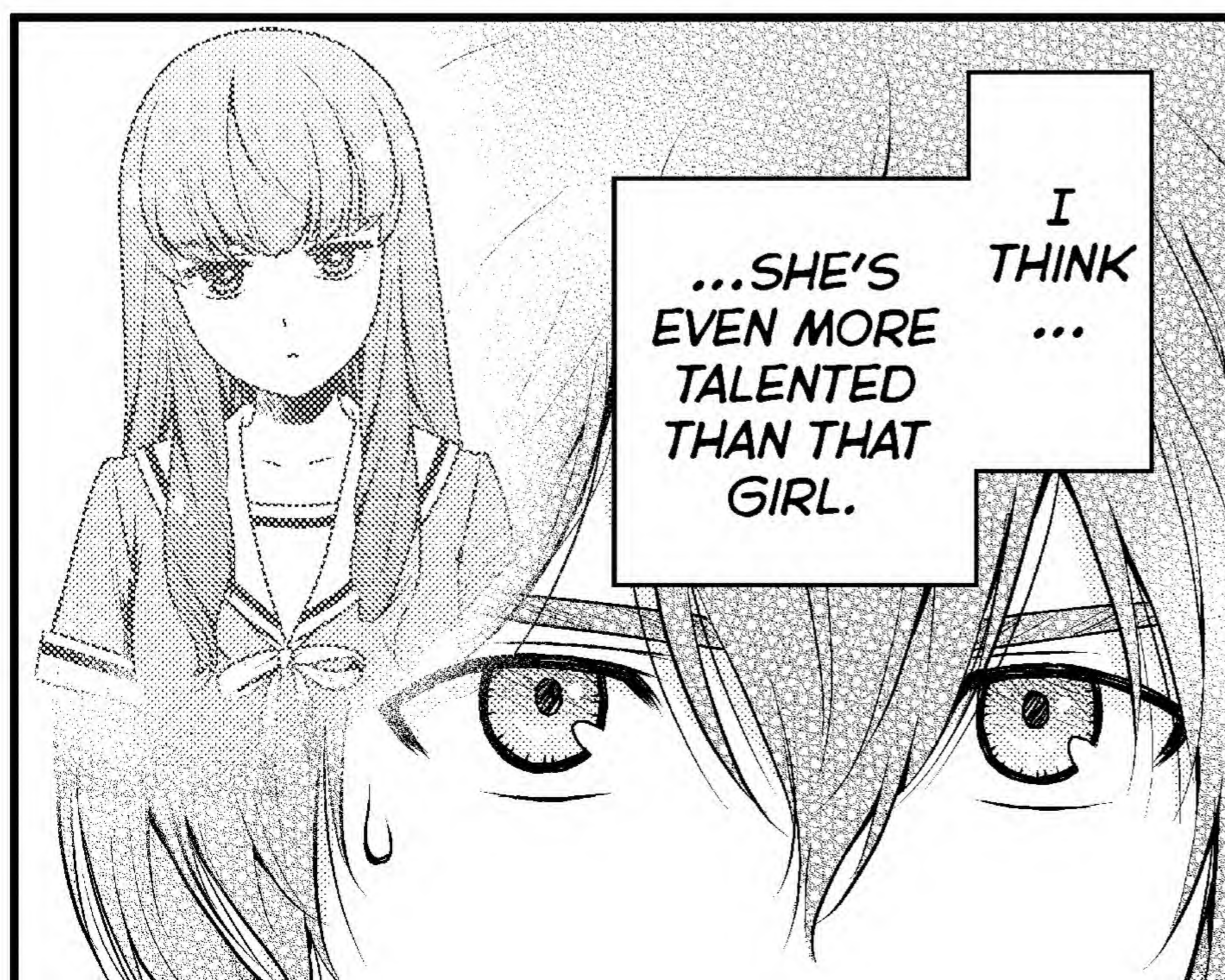
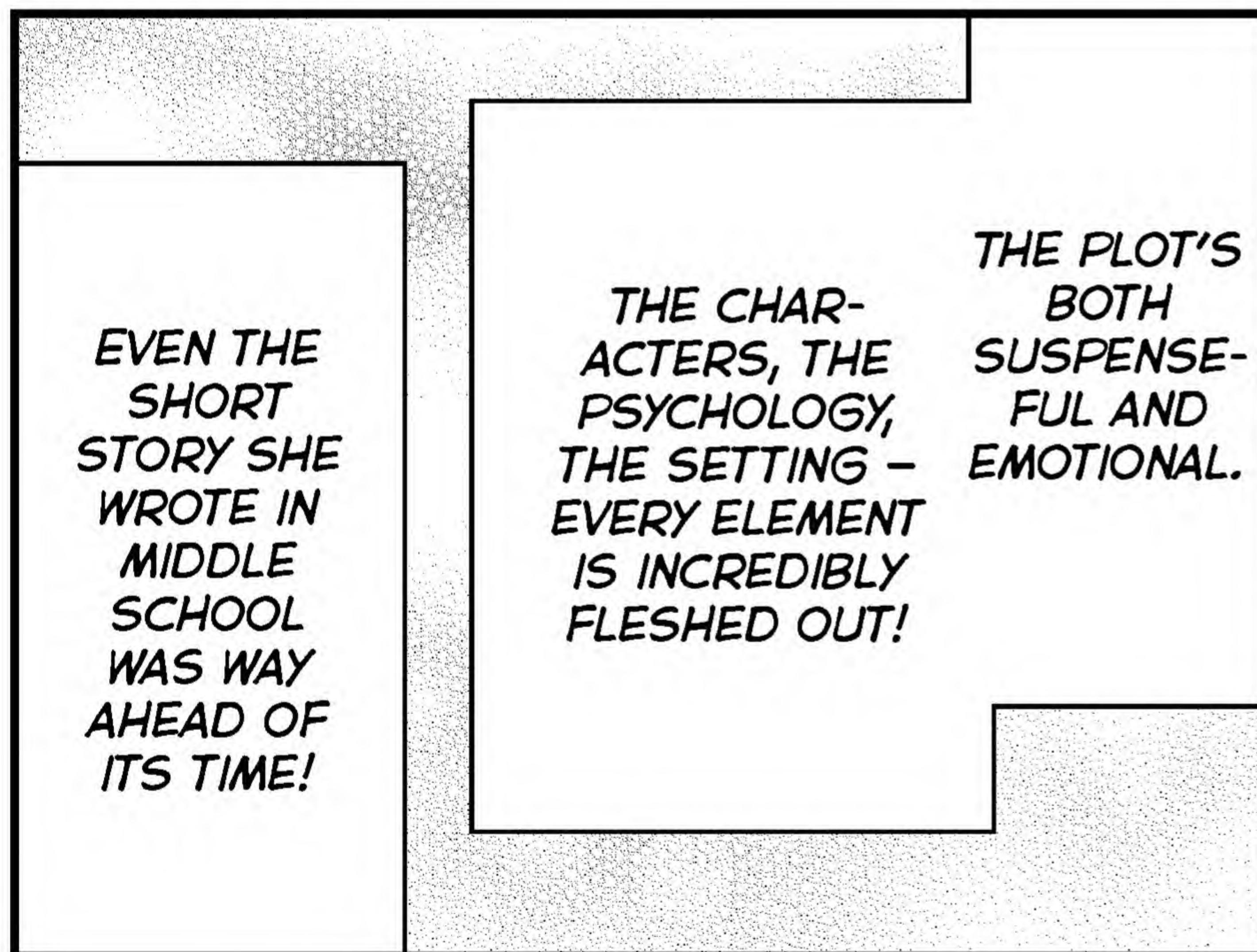
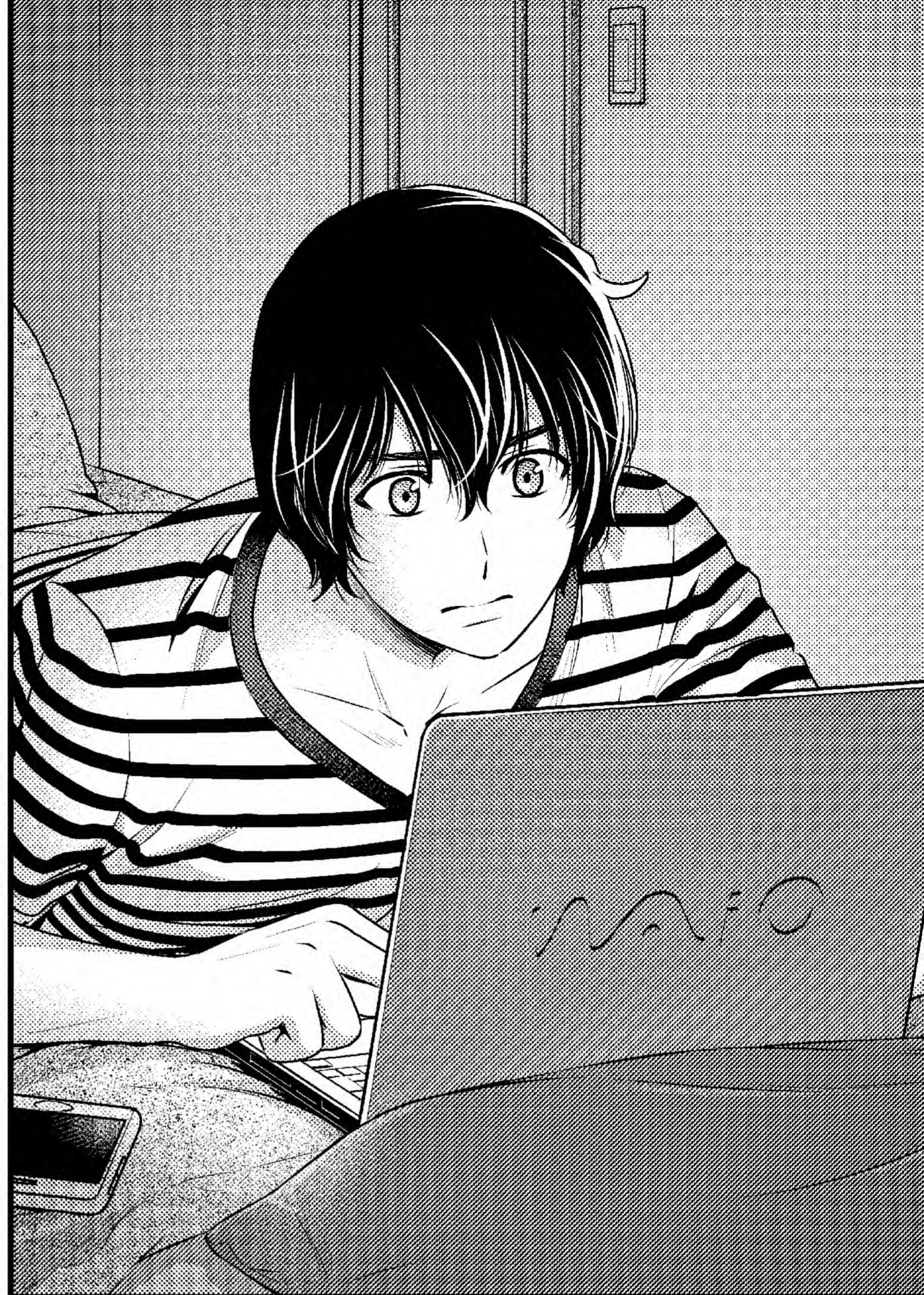
LUCKY... I'M JEALOUS.

I JUST STOPPED BY TO WATCH ON THE WAY HOME.

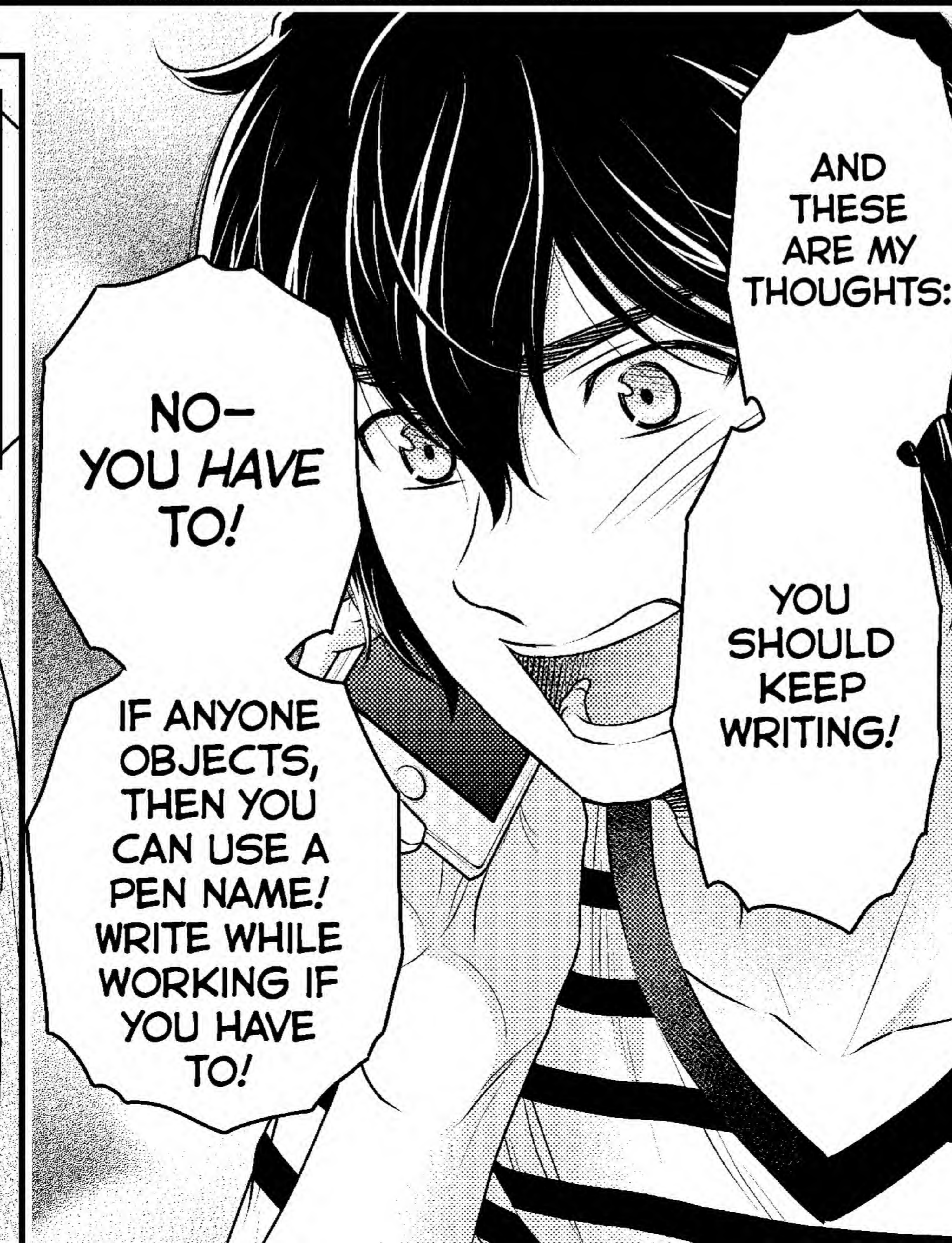
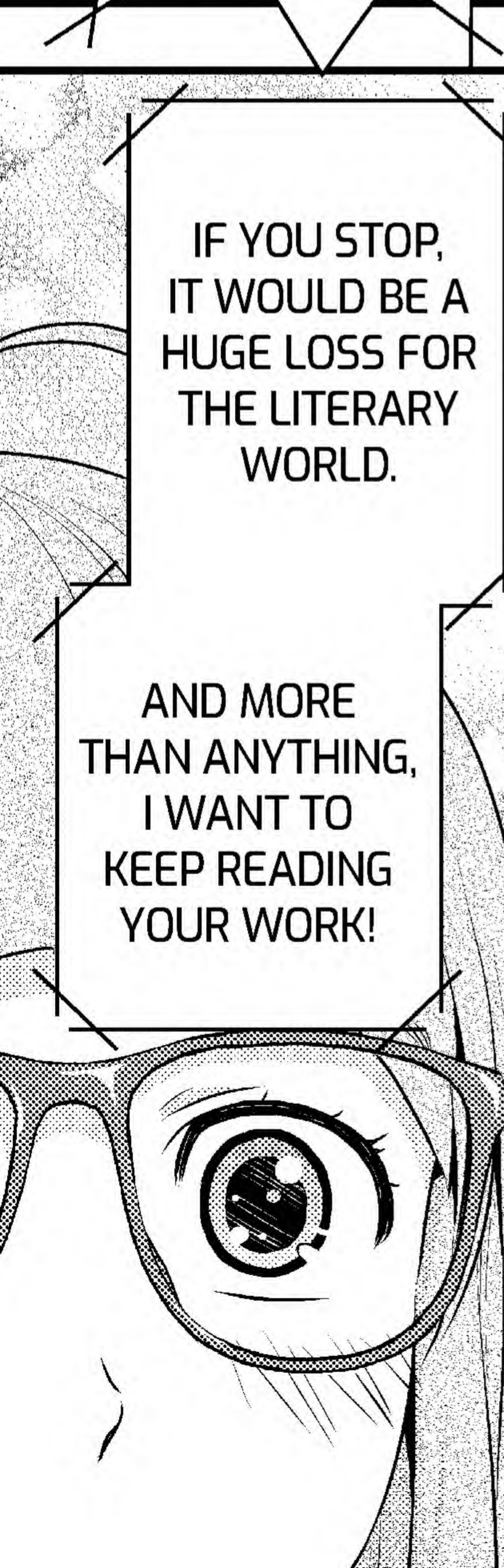
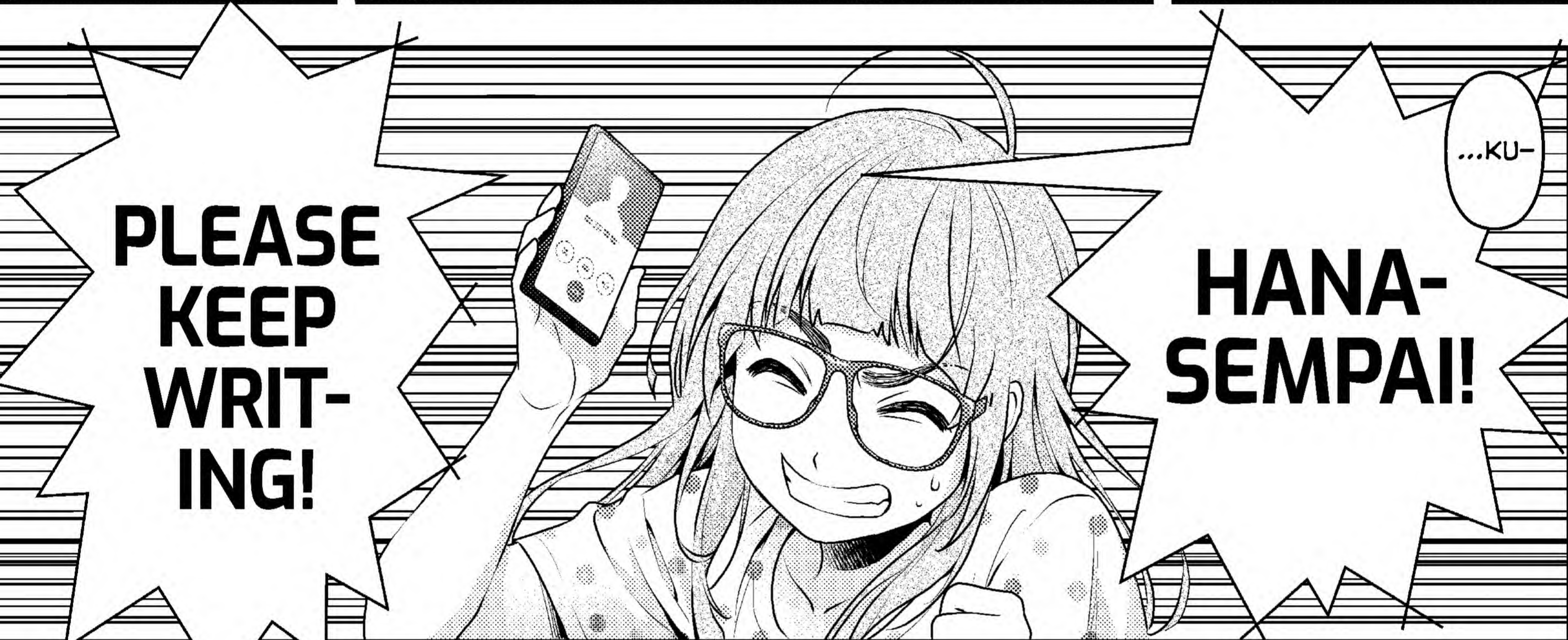
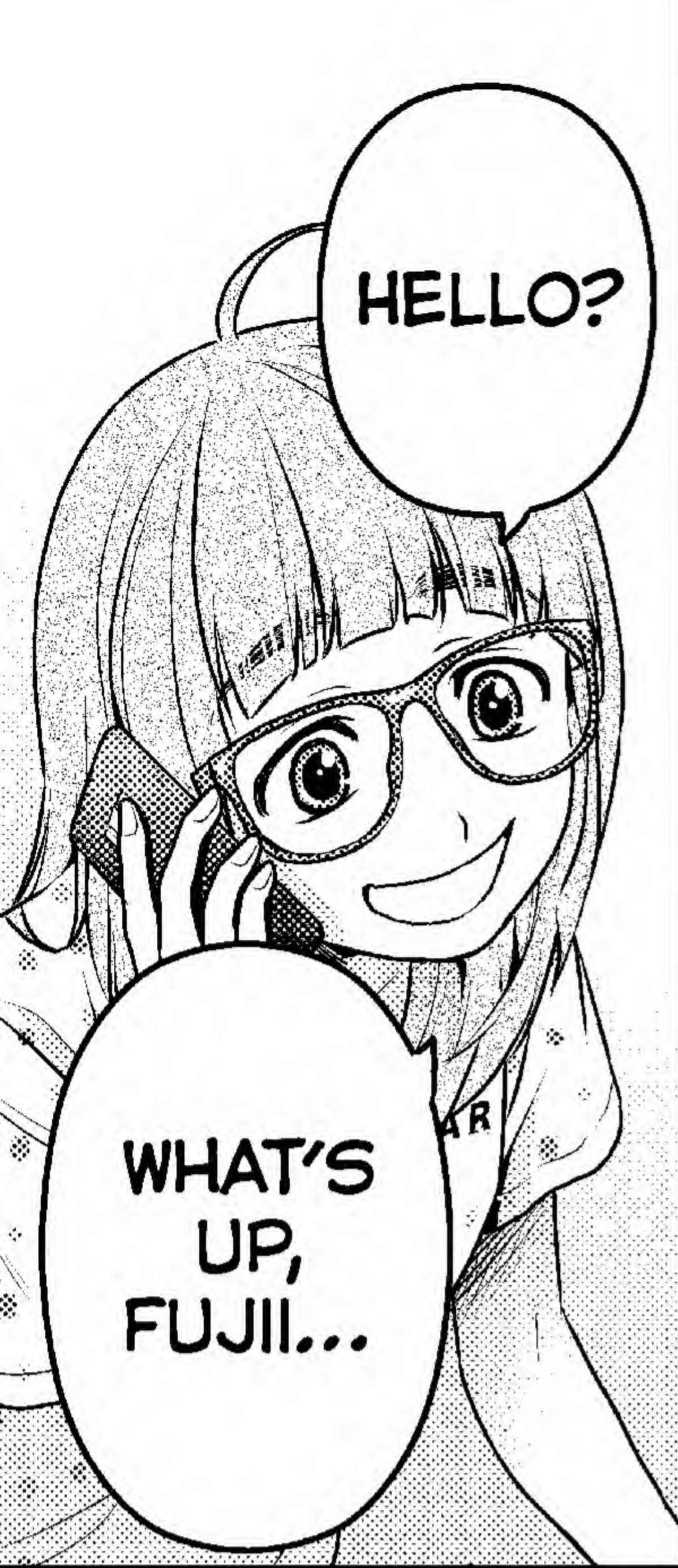
HMM.

LOOKS PRETTY.









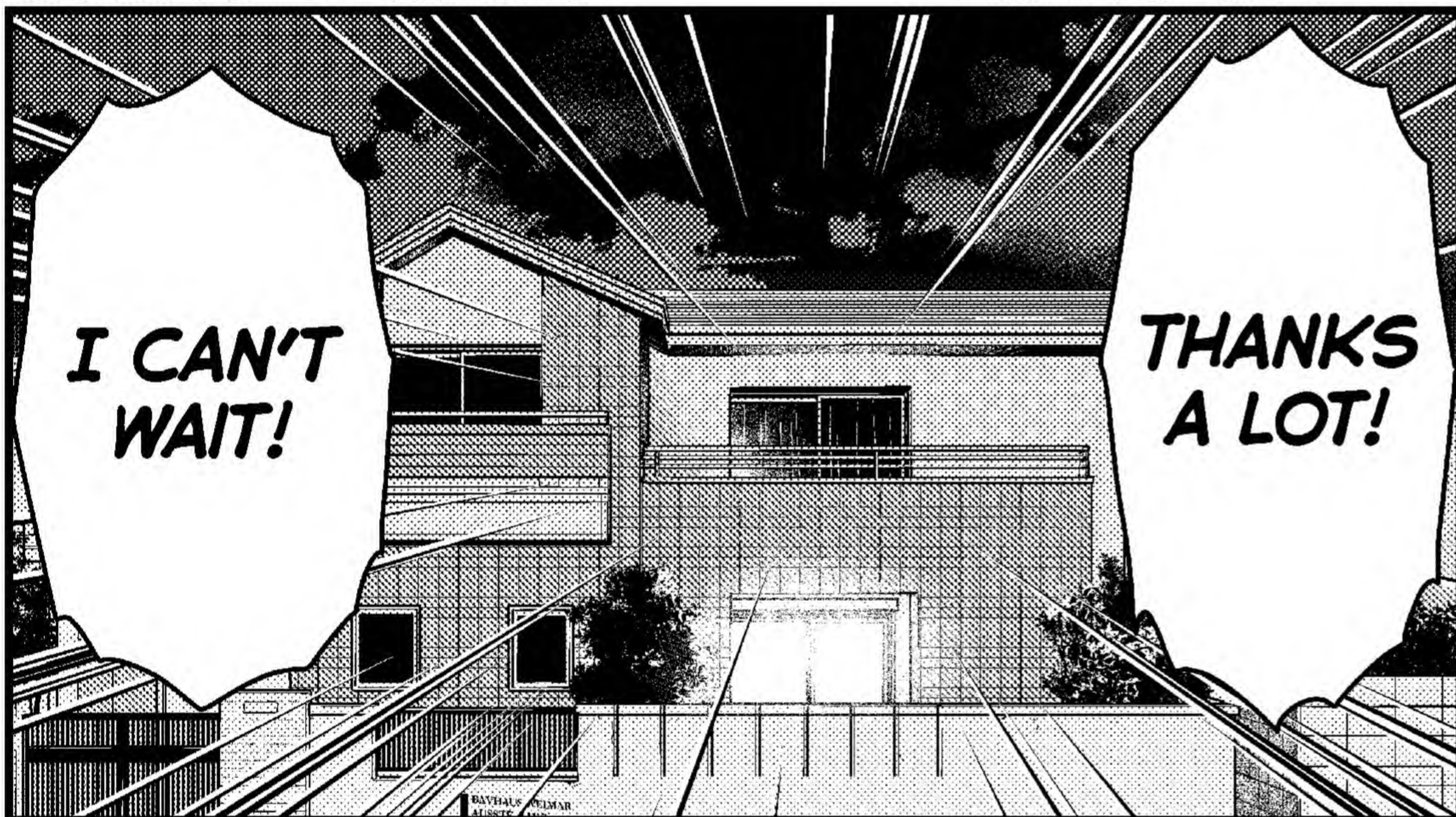




...MAYBE  
I'LL  
GIVE IT  
A SHOT,  
AFTER  
ALL.

WELL, WHEN  
YOU PUT IT  
THAT WAY...

I SEE  
...



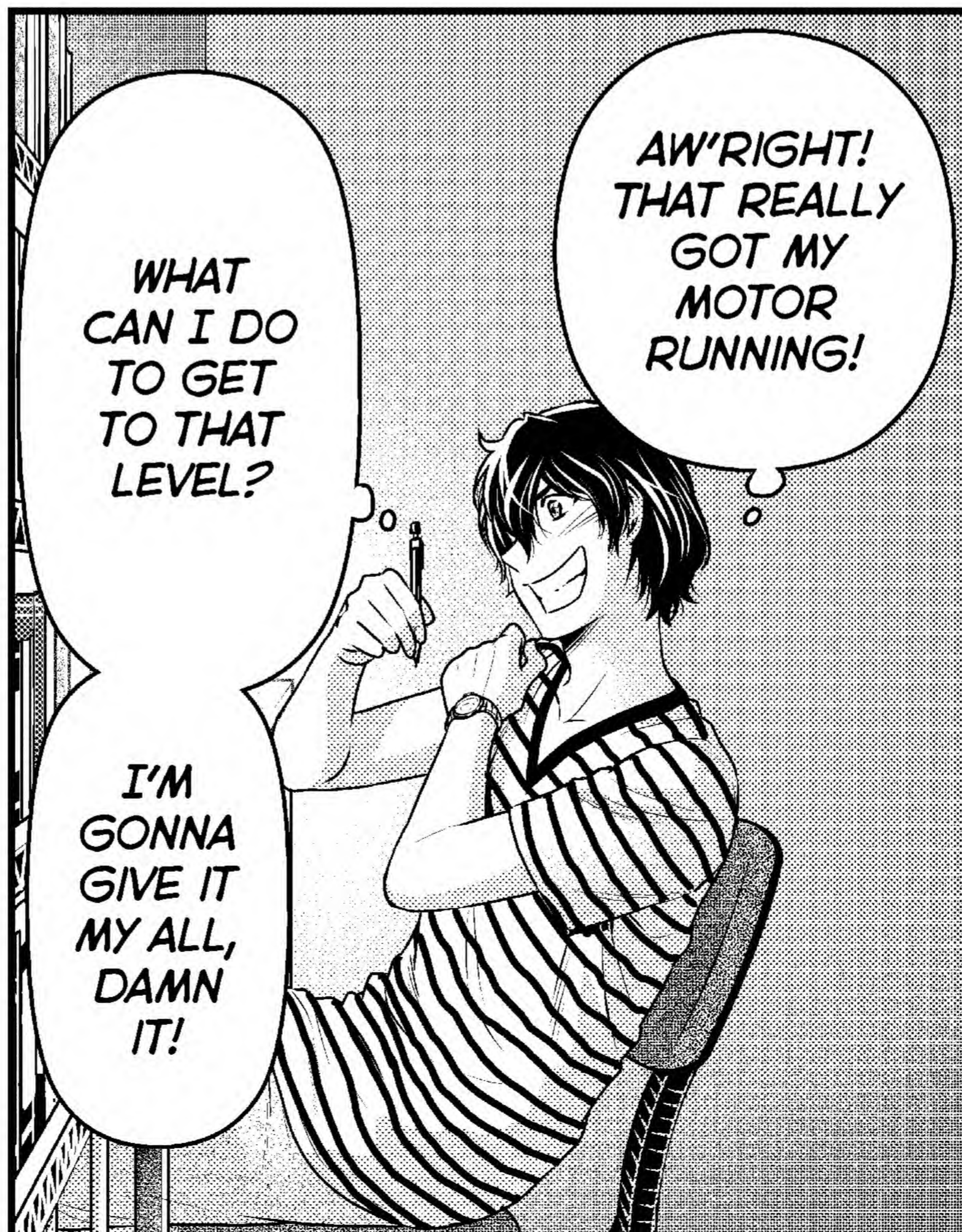
I CAN'T  
WAIT!

THANKS  
A LOT!



...AS LONG AS  
IT DOESN'T  
INTERFERE  
WITH WORK.

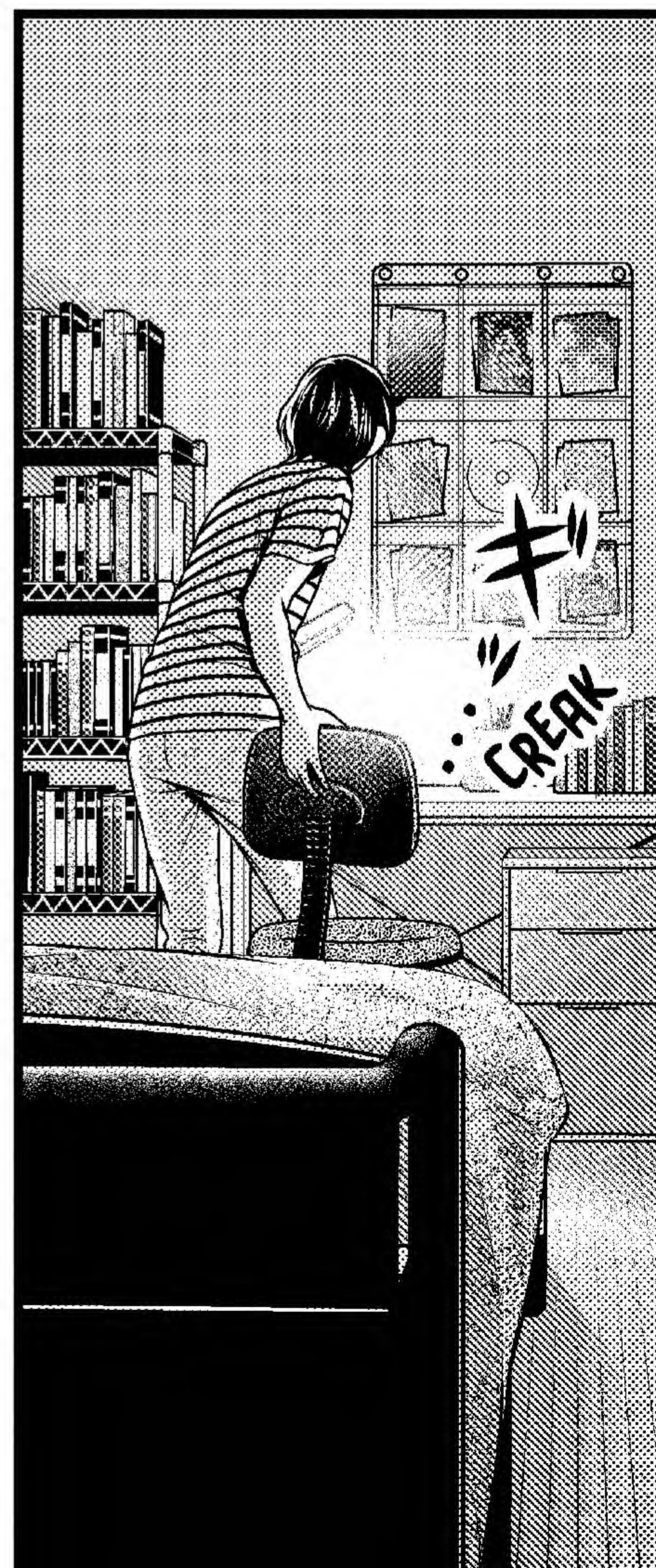
MY MOM  
PROB-  
ABLY  
WON'T  
MIND...



WHAT  
CAN I DO  
TO GET  
TO THAT  
LEVEL?

AW'RIGHT!  
THAT REALLY  
GOT MY  
MOTOR  
RUNNING!

I'M  
GONNA  
GIVE IT  
MY ALL,  
DAMN  
IT!







I'LL BE BLUNT.  
I'M WONDERING  
IF YOU'LL  
WRITE AN  
EROTIC STORY  
FOR US.



FUJII  
SPEAK-  
ING.

HELLO?



I WANTED  
TO ASK  
YOU A  
FAVOR.

OH.  
FUJII-  
KUN? SORRY  
TO CALL  
SO LATE.

WHAT'S  
UP?



AND I  
CAN'T FIND  
ANYONE  
ELSE TO  
FILL IN  
FOR HIM.

OUR USUAL  
AUTHOR IS  
DOWN AND  
OUT WITH  
A SUMMER  
COLD,

UH-HUH.  
YOU KNOW  
HOW THERE'S  
AN EROTICA  
SECTION AT  
THE BACK OF  
BUNGEIKATO,  
RIGHT?

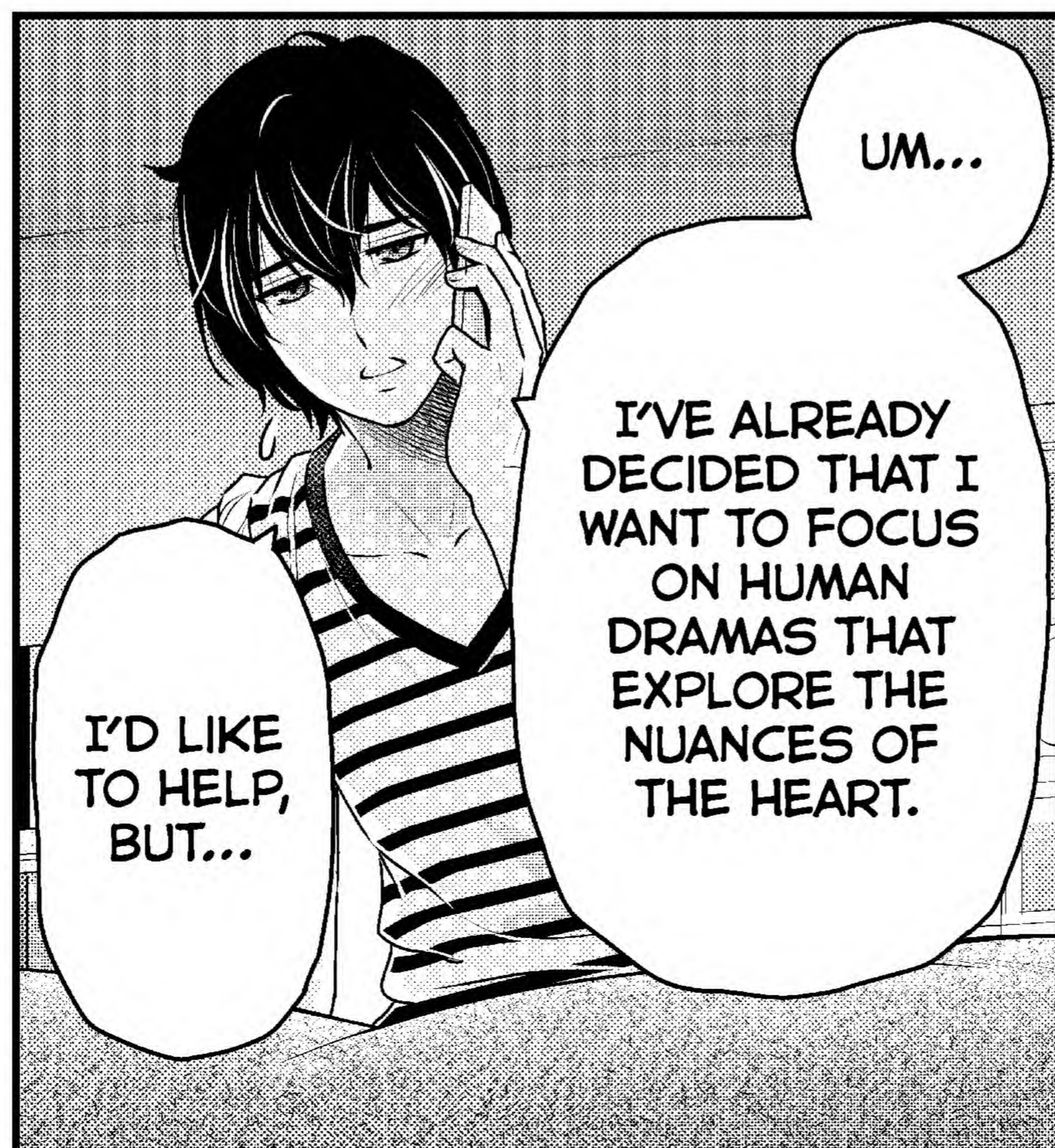
A-A-AN  
EROTIC  
STORY?!



I'VE  
NEVER  
WRIT-  
TEN  
ANY  
BEFORE.

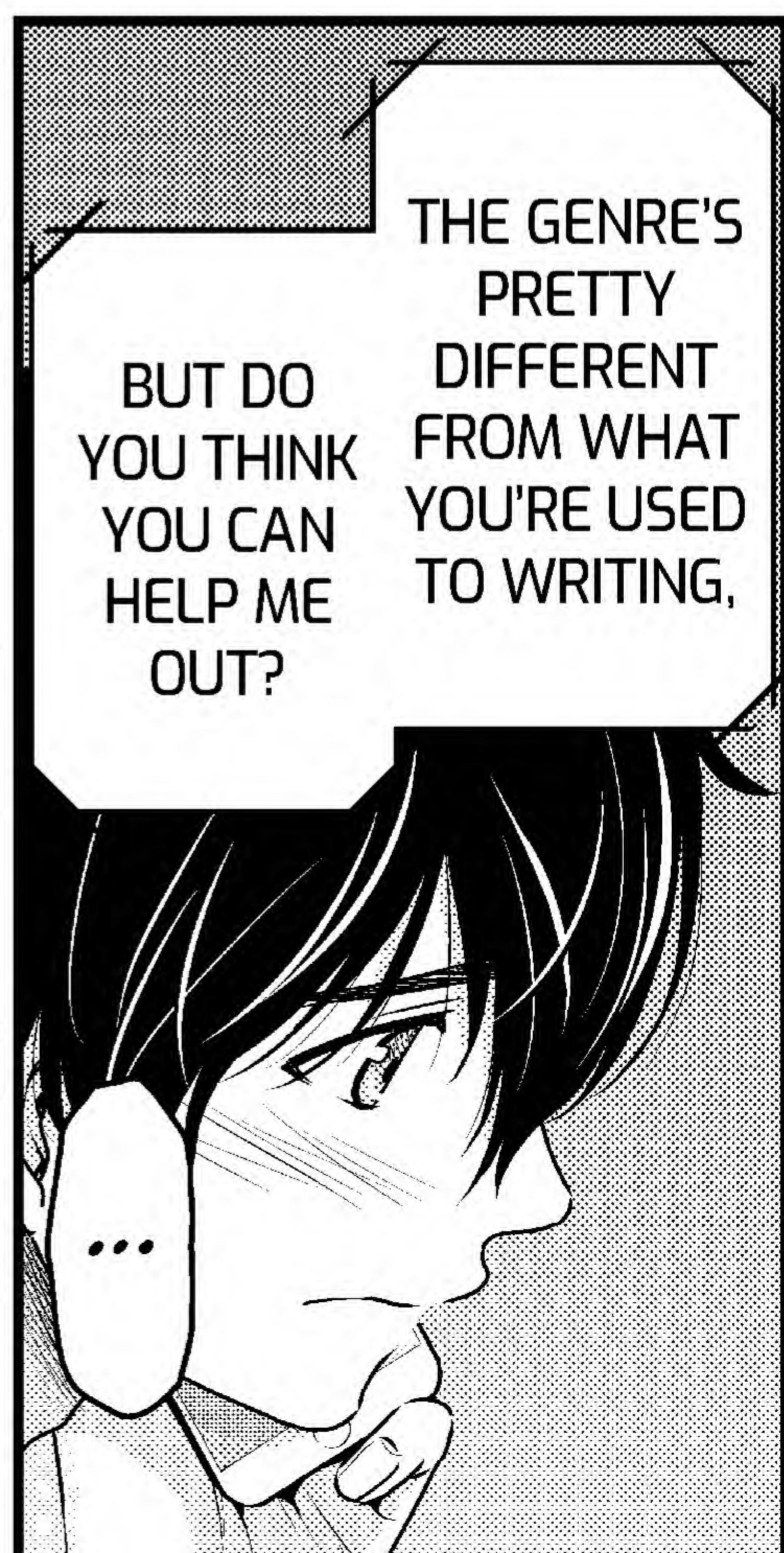
...I DON'T  
KNOW  
ABOUT  
EROTICA.

WITH  
ALL DUE  
RESPECT,  
FUJII-  
KUN...



I'D LIKE  
TO HELP,  
BUT...

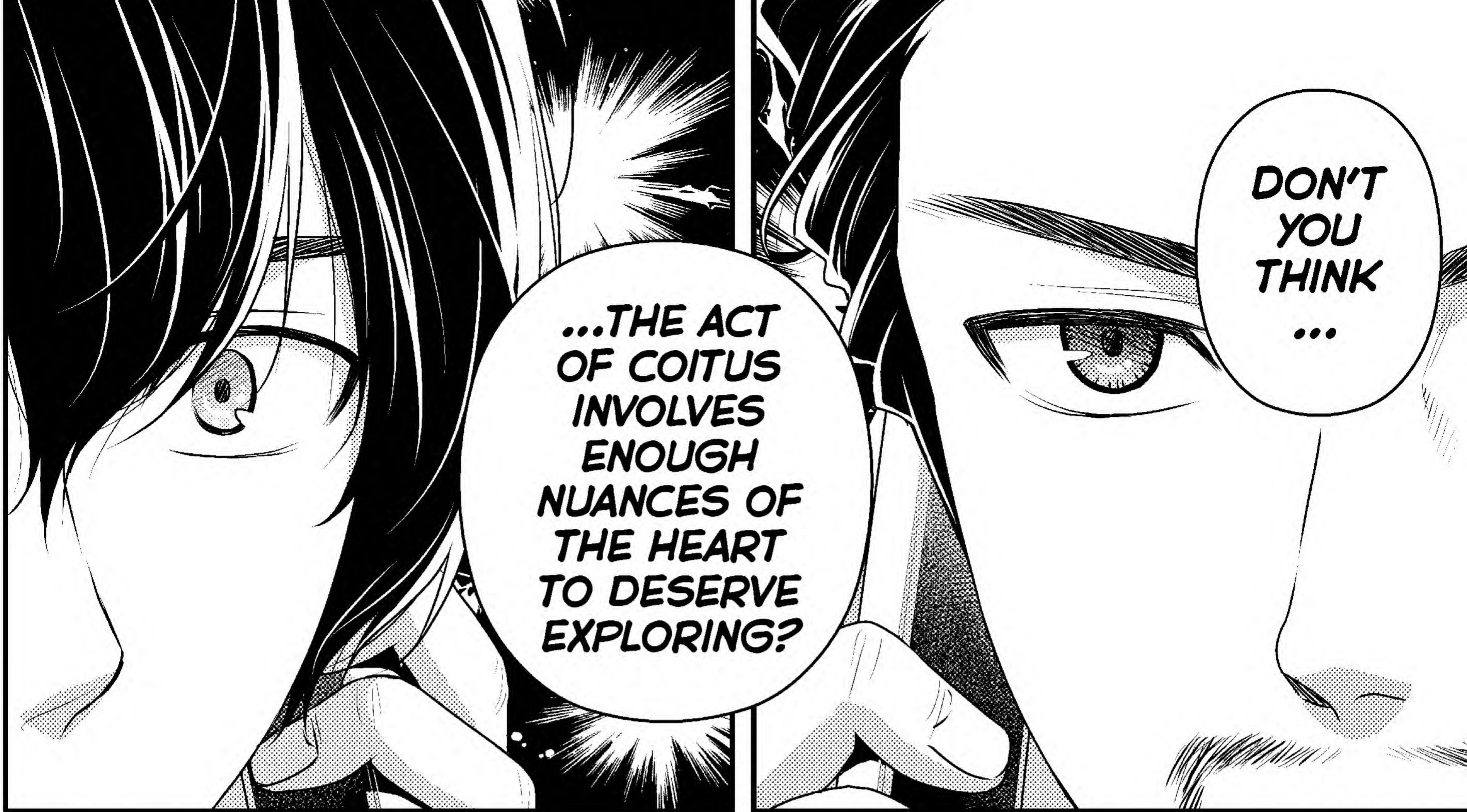
UM...  
  
I'VE ALREADY  
DECIDED THAT I  
WANT TO FOCUS  
ON HUMAN  
DRAMAS THAT  
EXPLORE THE  
NUANCES OF  
THE HEART.



BUT DO  
YOU THINK  
YOU CAN  
HELP ME  
OUT?

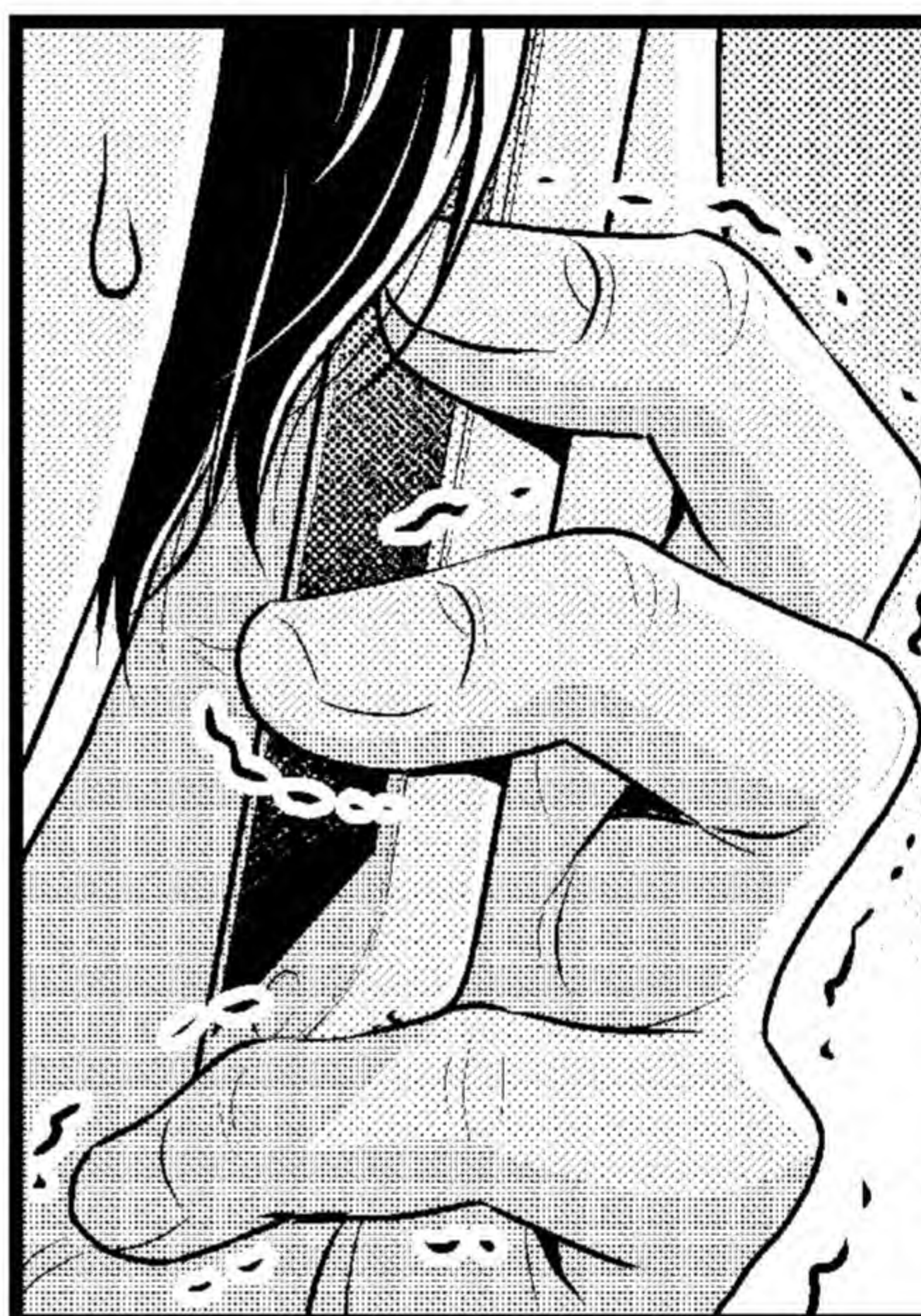
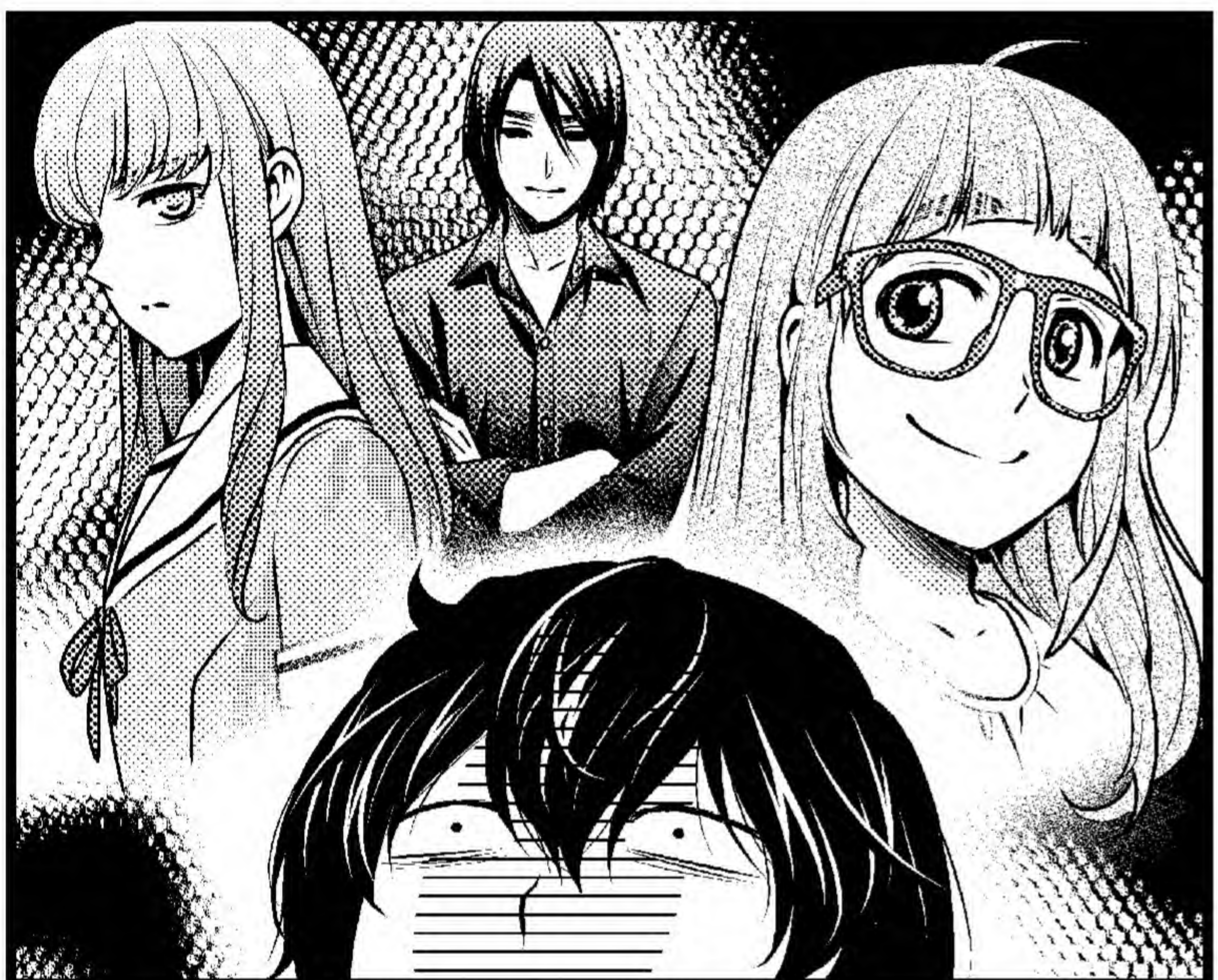
THE GENRE'S  
PRETTY  
DIFFERENT  
FROM WHAT  
YOU'RE USED  
TO WRITING,





...THE ACT  
OF COITUS  
INVOLVES  
ENOUGH  
NUANCES OF  
THE HEART  
TO DESERVE  
EXPLORING?

DON'T  
YOU  
THINK  
...



...THE  
PATH TO  
IMPROVING  
AS AN  
AUTHOR?!

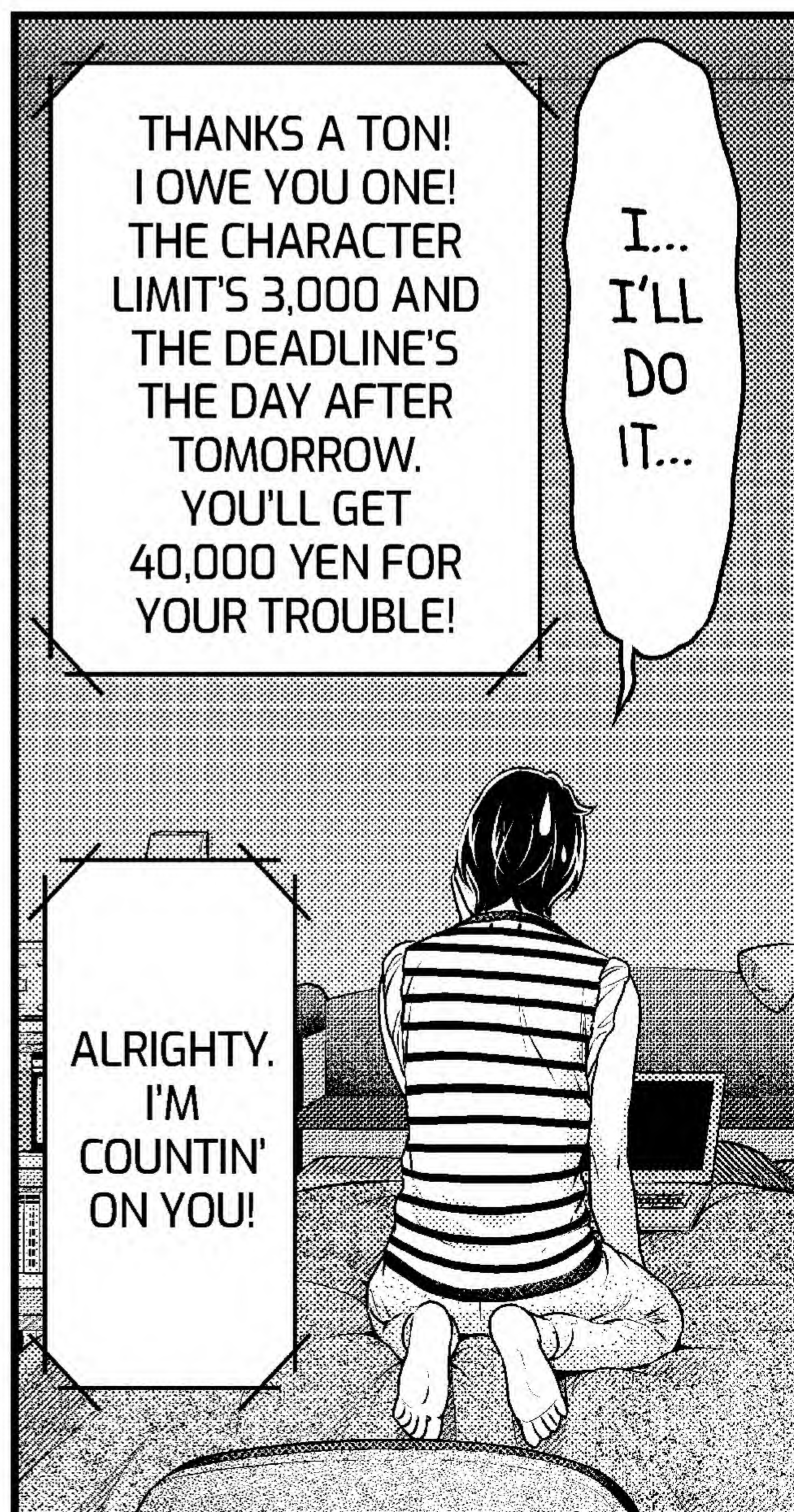
ISN'T  
TACKLING  
AND  
MASTERING  
YOUR WEAK  
POINTS...



W-  
WELL,  
SHIT...



BOOP  
BOOP  
BOOP

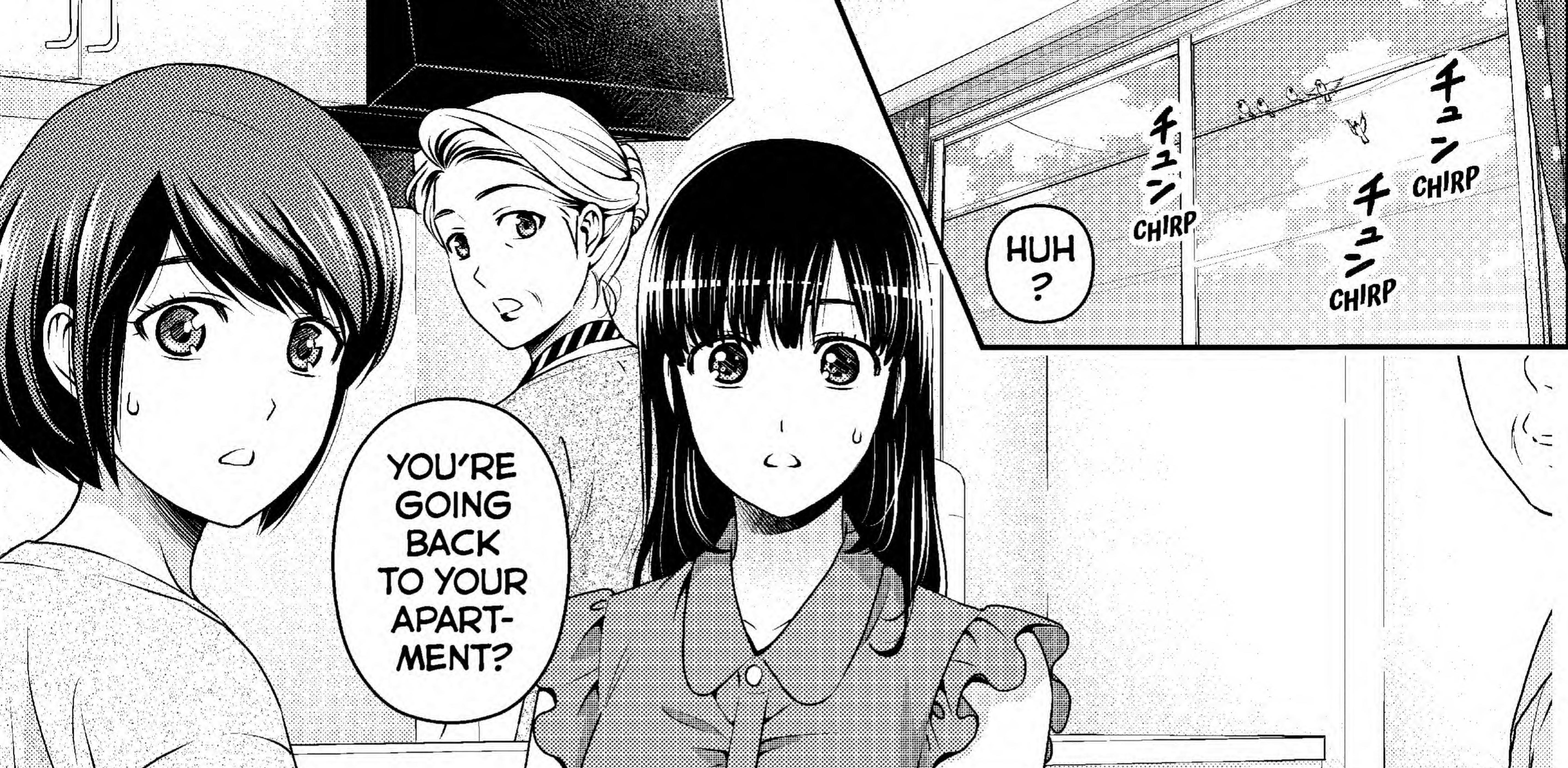


THANKS A TON!  
I OWE YOU ONE!  
THE CHARACTER  
LIMIT'S 3,000 AND  
THE DEADLINE'S  
THE DAY AFTER  
TOMORROW.  
YOU'LL GET  
40,000 YEN FOR  
YOUR TROUBLE!

I...  
I'LL  
DO  
IT...

ALRIGHTY.  
I'M  
COUNTIN'  
ON YOU!





YOU'RE  
GOING  
BACK  
TO YOUR  
APART-  
MENT?

HUH  
?

チュン  
CHIRP

チュン  
CHIRP



YEAH.

I SHOULD  
GET ENOUGH  
FROM WORK  
TO STAY ON  
TOP OF MY  
BILLS SOON.

I  
SUPPOSE  
SO. BUT  
ARE YOU  
OKAY ON  
MONEY?



AND IT'S  
EASIER TO  
GET TO  
WORK AND  
SCHOOL  
FROM  
THERE.

YEAH.  
RUI'S HAND  
IS MOSTLY  
HEALED,  
SO SHE  
DOESN'T  
NEED MY  
HELP ANY-  
MORE.



BUT  
I WANT TO  
FOCUS  
ON MY  
WRITING,  
TOO...

MMM. I  
THOUGHT  
ABOUT IT.



WELL,  
I'M NOT  
LYING,  
TECHNI-  
CALLY.

ノット



YOU MIGHT  
AS WELL  
STAY FOR  
THE WHOLE  
BREAK.

YOU  
NEED TO  
EAT WELL  
SO THE  
SUMMER  
HEAT  
DOESN'T  
GET TO  
YOU.

...

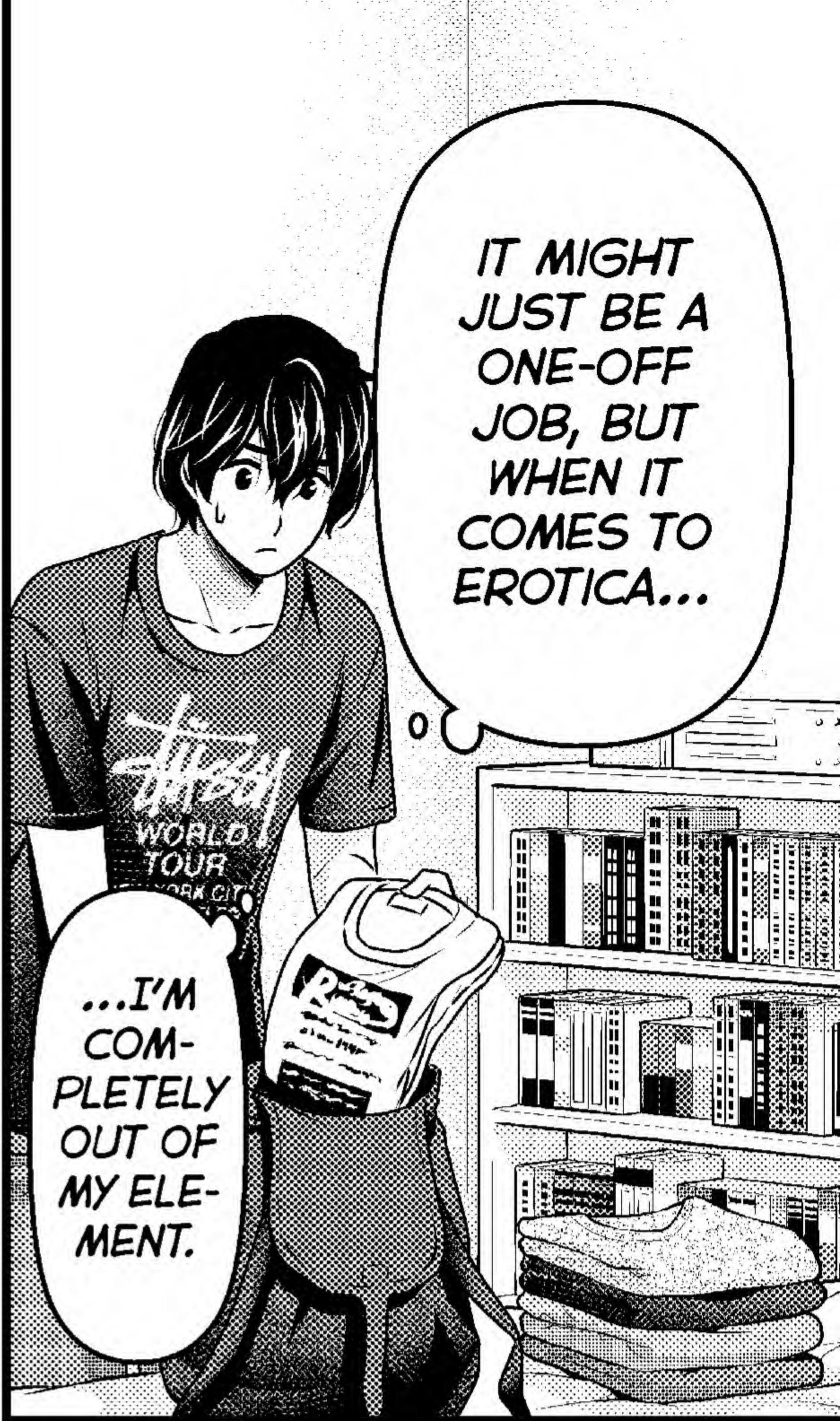




HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO CONCENTRATE WHEN ANYONE CAN COME INTO MY ROOM AT ANY MINUTE?

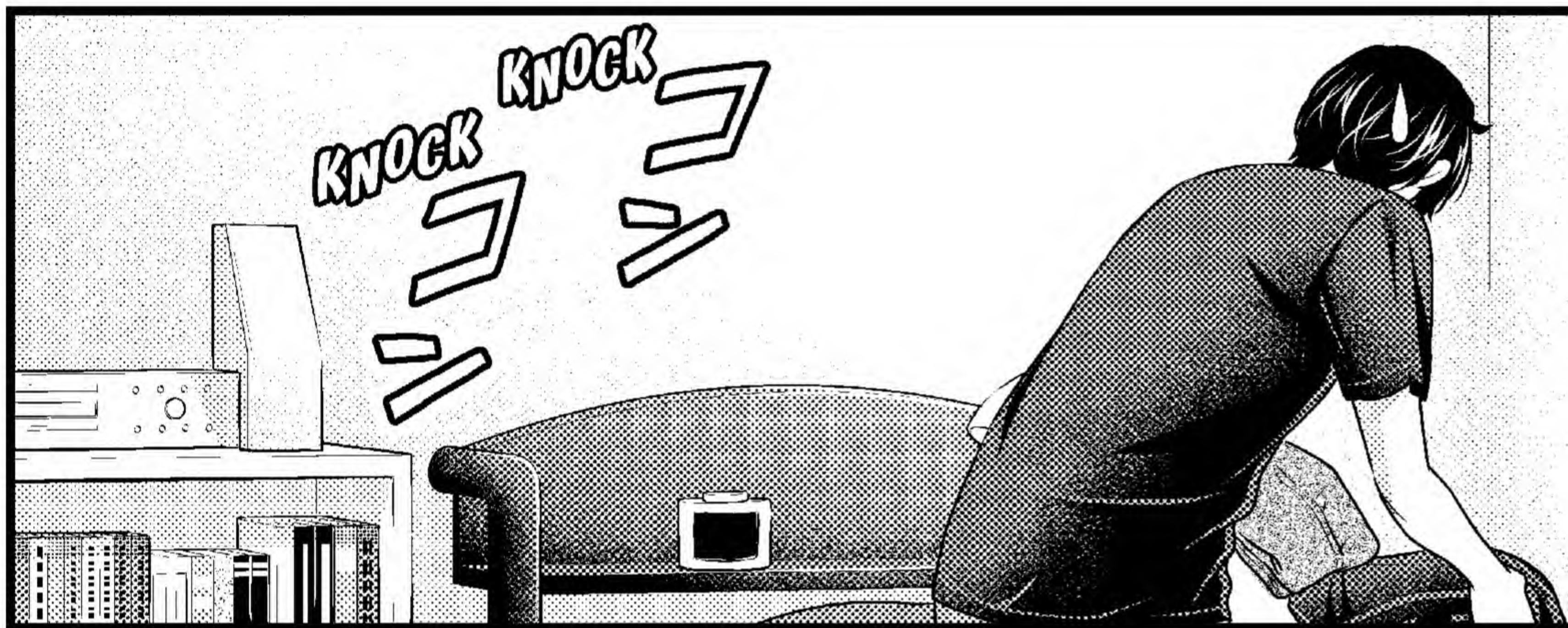
NATSUO!

IN ORDER TO WRITE THIS, I'M BASICALLY GONNA HAVE TO LET MY FANTASIES RUN WILD.



IT MIGHT JUST BE A ONE-OFF JOB, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO EROTICA...

...I'M COMPLETELY OUT OF MY ELEMENT.



SO I GUESS THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY.

WELL, IT'S GONNA GET HARDER TO GO BACK THE LONGER I STAY HERE,



I'VE GOT SOME STUFF TO TAKE CARE OF.

YEAH.

YOU'RE GOING BACK, HUH?



C'MON NOW...



HMM.



CHACK

JOLT





PUTTING  
IT OFF  
WON'T LET  
US OPENLY  
FOOL  
AROUND,  
YOU KNOW.

HEY.  
WHY DON'T  
YOU WAIT  
A WEEK AT  
LEAST?



NOW I  
WISH I'D  
BEEN A  
LITTLE  
MORE  
CLINGY...

...WHILE YOU  
WERE STILL  
AROUND.



AND I  
CAN'T  
REALLY  
CONCENTRATE  
HERE,  
SO...

...



YOU'RE  
WRITING  
ONE?!

A-  
AN  
EROTIC  
STORY  
?!

O-  
ONE OF THE  
AUTHORS  
GOT SICK,  
SO I'M  
FILLING IN  
FOR HIM...



...GOING  
TO WRITE  
ABOUT  
ME?

ARE  
YOU  
...



TSUTAYA-SAN  
ASKED ME  
TO WRITE A  
SHORT STORY  
OUT OF  
THE BLUE.

AN  
EROTIC  
STORY,  
AT THAT.

THAT'S  
PARTLY  
WHY I'M  
LEAVING  
...





I WAS JUST JOKING, AND...



RE-MEMBER?

YEAH. IT'LL BE A RAUNCHY EROTIC NOVEL.

I'M SURPRISED YOU DO...

...BACK DURING OUR TRIP, YOU SAID YOU'D WRITE ONE ABOUT ME.



HM?

I MEAN ...

HUH ?!



BUT THE WAY WE MET ALREADY SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF AN EROTIC NOVEL! I CAN JUST BASE IT OFF OF THAT!

I WASN'T SURE WHAT I SHOULD WRITE ABOUT,



?!

THAT'S IT!

GRAB



AND I ONLY ASKED YOU TO HAVE SEX BECAUSE I THOUGHT WE'D NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.

MMM... I THOUGHT YOU SEEMED LIKE A REGULAR GUY, BUT SORTA MOODIER THAN THE OTHER TWO.



WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF ME?!

WAS THERE A SPARK OR ANYTHING? DID YOU FEEL LIKE FATE BROUGHT US TOGETHER?

ALL RIGHT! WITH THAT SETTLED, CAN YOU GIVE ME A HAND, RUI?

UHH, OKAY ...





I'M  
ACTUALLY  
GOING TO  
LOSE MY  
VIRGINITY  
TO THIS  
GUY...

OH,  
GOD  
...

FOR  
EXAMPLE,  
LIKE...



SO, IF  
ANYTHING, I  
WAS KIND OF  
ANNOYED THAT  
YOU KEPT  
STALLING...

WHY  
ME...?

ACTUALLY,  
I JUST  
WANTED TO  
GET IT OVER  
WITH BEFORE  
ANYONE  
CAME  
HOME.



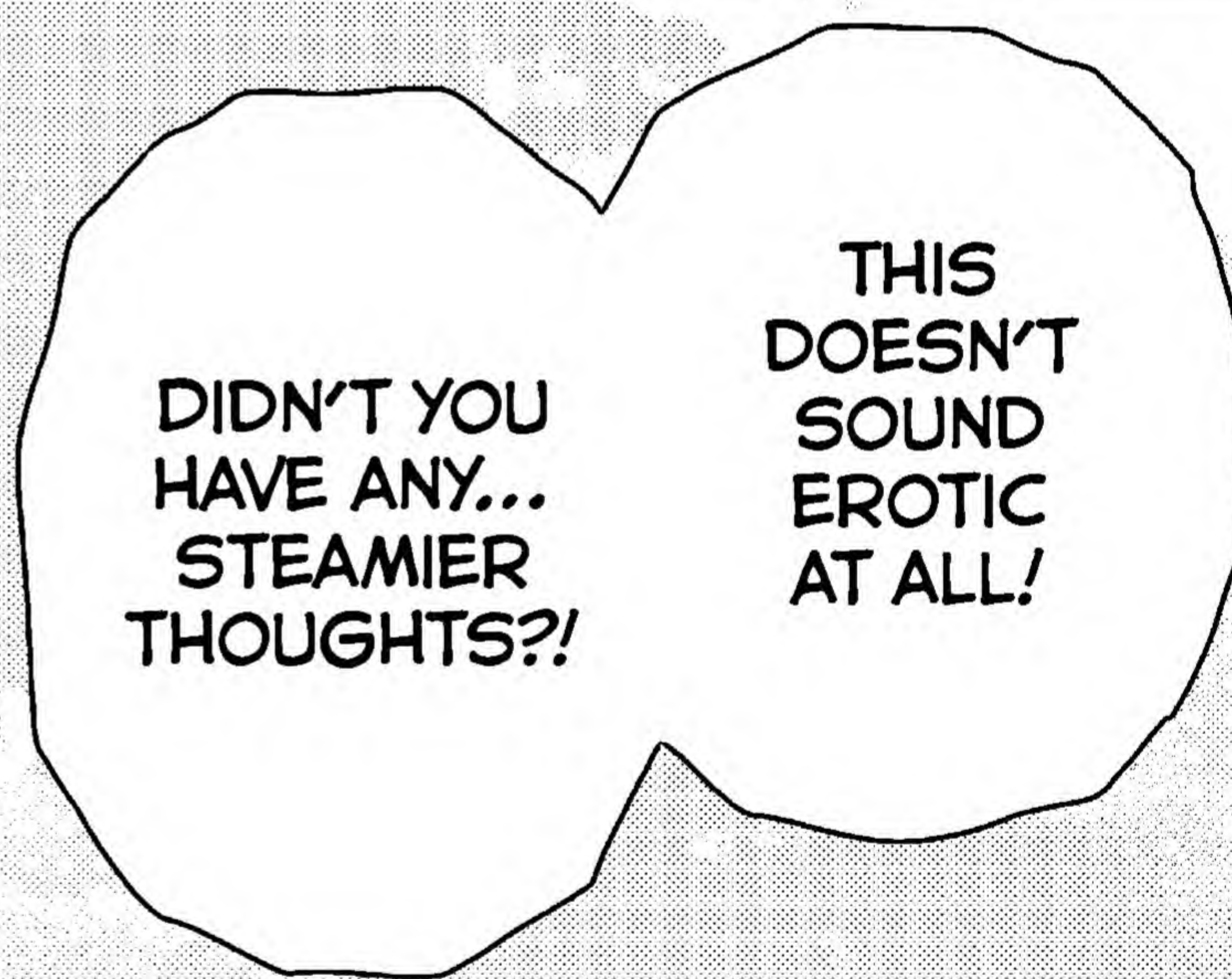
YOU HAD  
TO FEEL  
A LITTLE  
NERVOUS,  
RIGHT?

O-O  
KAY  
...

THEN  
WHAT  
ABOUT  
WHEN YOU  
BROUGHT  
ME TO  
YOUR  
ROOM?!



JUST  
USE YOUR  
IMAGINATION  
AND EMBELLISH  
IT A LITTLE.  
IT'S FICTION,  
AFTER ALL.



DIDN'T YOU  
HAVE ANY...  
STEAMIER  
THOUGHTS?!

THIS  
DOESN'T  
SOUND  
EROTIC  
AT ALL!

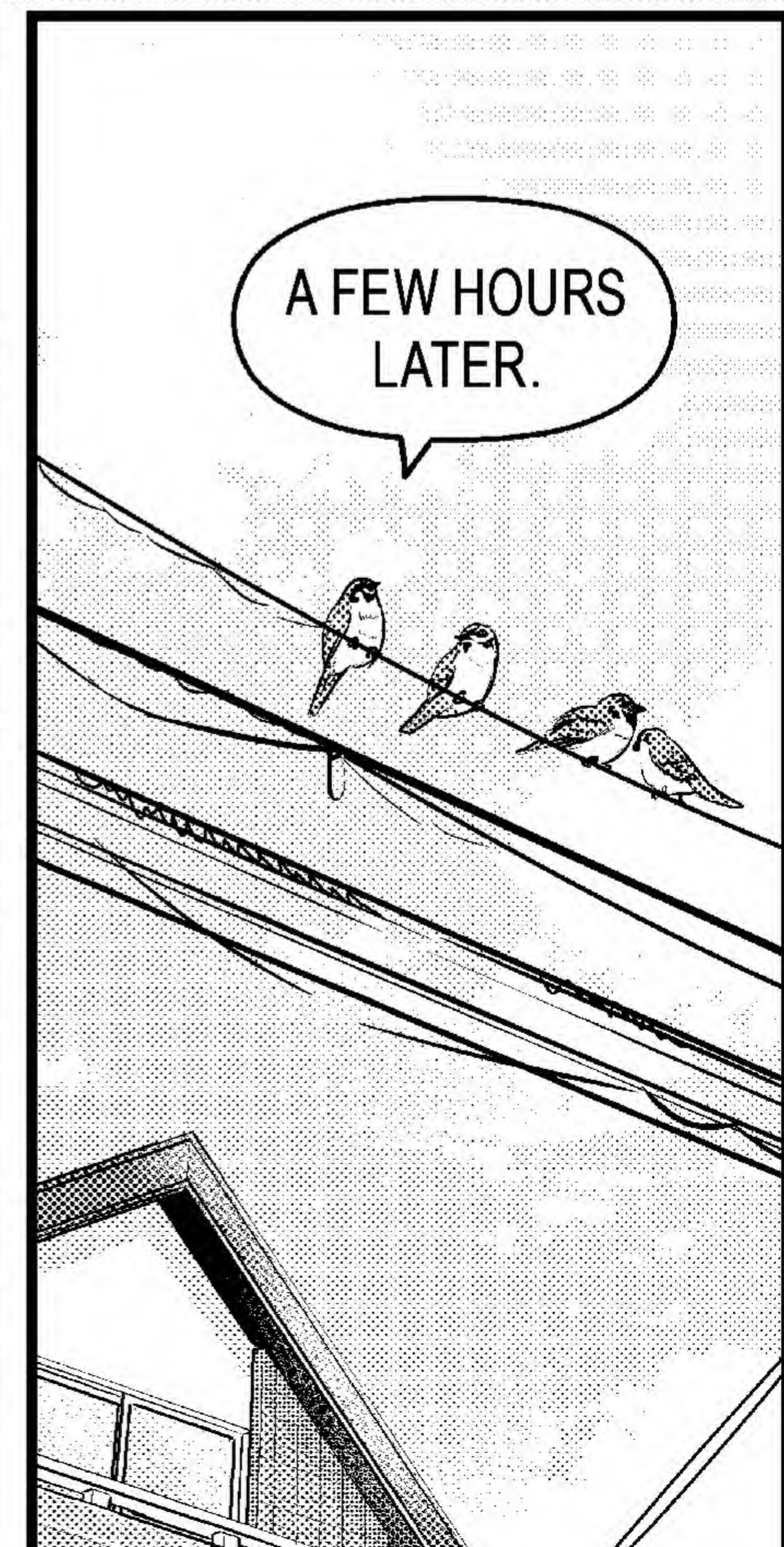


...WHERE  
DO I  
TAKE IT  
FROM  
HERE?

THE  
QUES-  
TION  
IS...



THAT  
SHOULD  
DO IT  
FOR THE  
OPEN-  
ING.



A FEW HOURS  
LATER.



程の手  
触り

# WHAT'S WRONG? WRITER'S BLOCK?

BUT SENSUAL  
EXPRESSIONS  
AREN'T EXACTLY  
MY FORTE, SO  
I'M NOT SURE  
WHAT TO DO...

IF YOU  
DON'T  
WANT TO,  
THEN  
THAT'S  
FINE.

ARE  
YOU  
SURE  
?

...WANNA  
FEEL THE  
REAL  
THING...

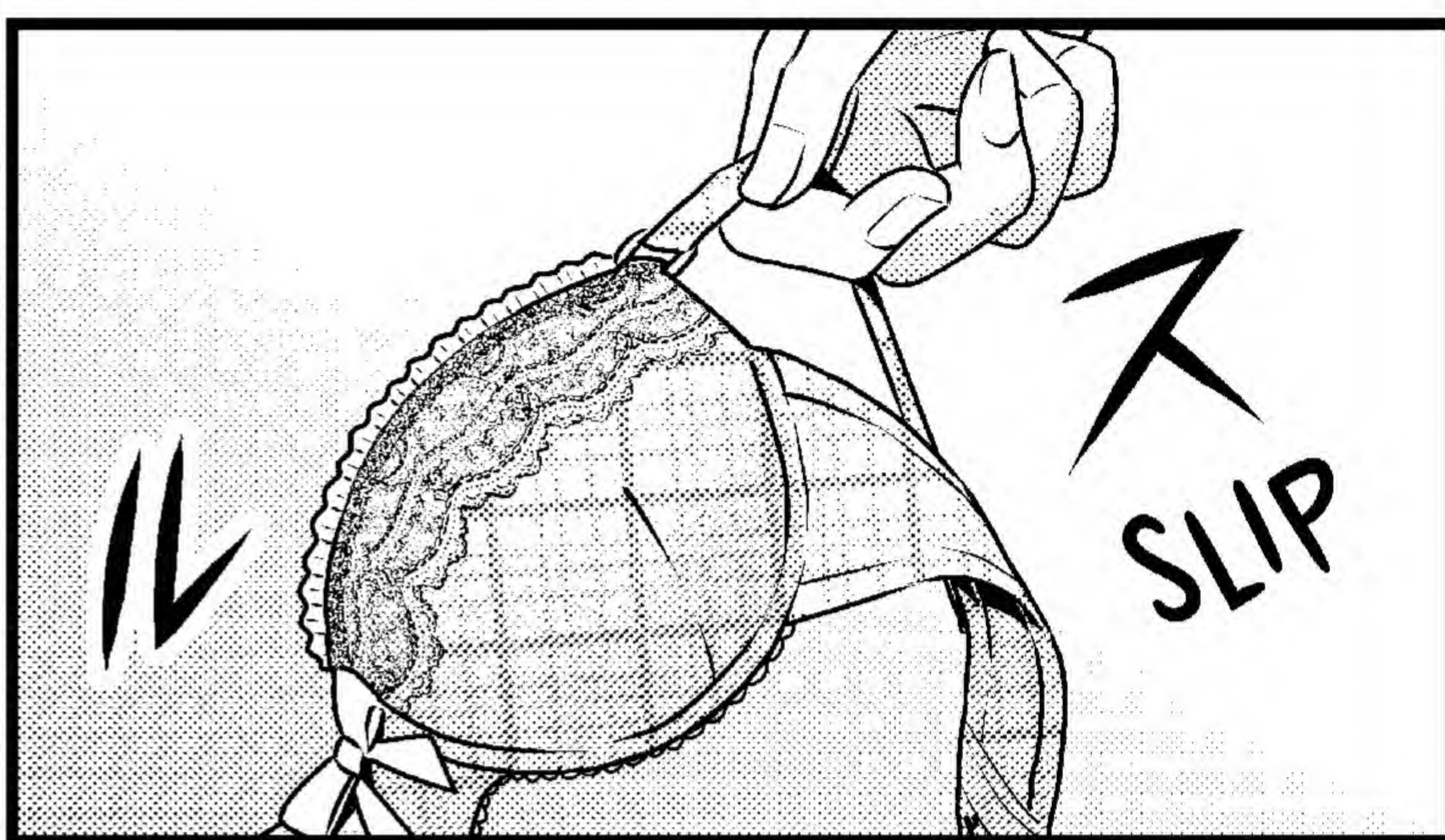
...TO  
HELP JOG  
YOUR  
IMAGINA-  
TION?

THE RETURN  
OF OUR LOST  
PLEASE!





YEAH ...



R-  
READY?



....!



MAN,  
I CAN  
NEVER  
GET  
OVER  
...

...  
JUST  
HOW  
SOFT  
THEY  
ARE!

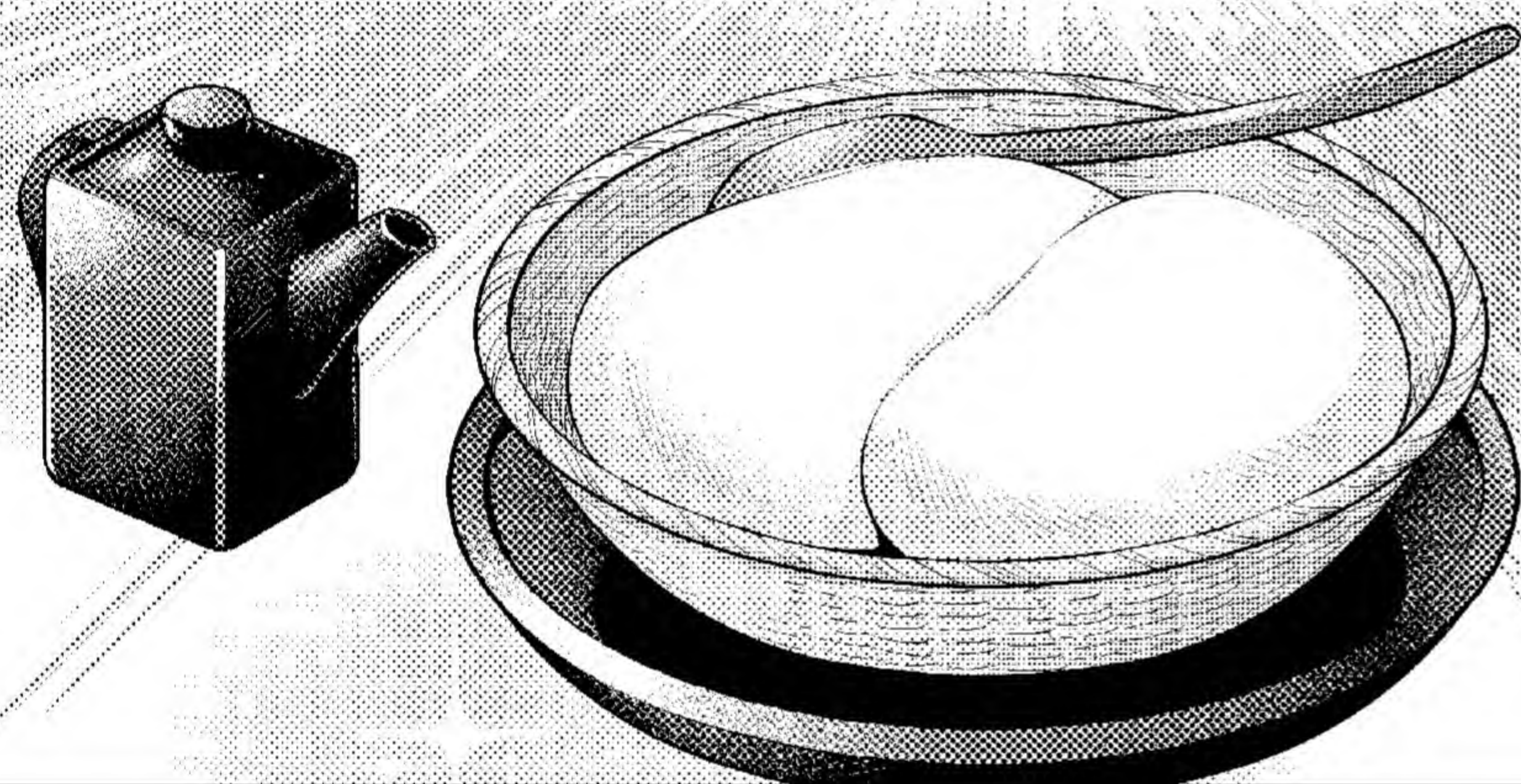


MM...





**...SIMMERED  
SILKEN TOFU!**







THINK  
YOU  
CAN...

...COME  
UP WITH  
SOME-  
THING  
GOOD?



UM...

SURE.

CAN I  
TOUCH  
YOU  
SOME  
MORE?

IS SHE  
GETTING  
TURNED  
ON?



AH...

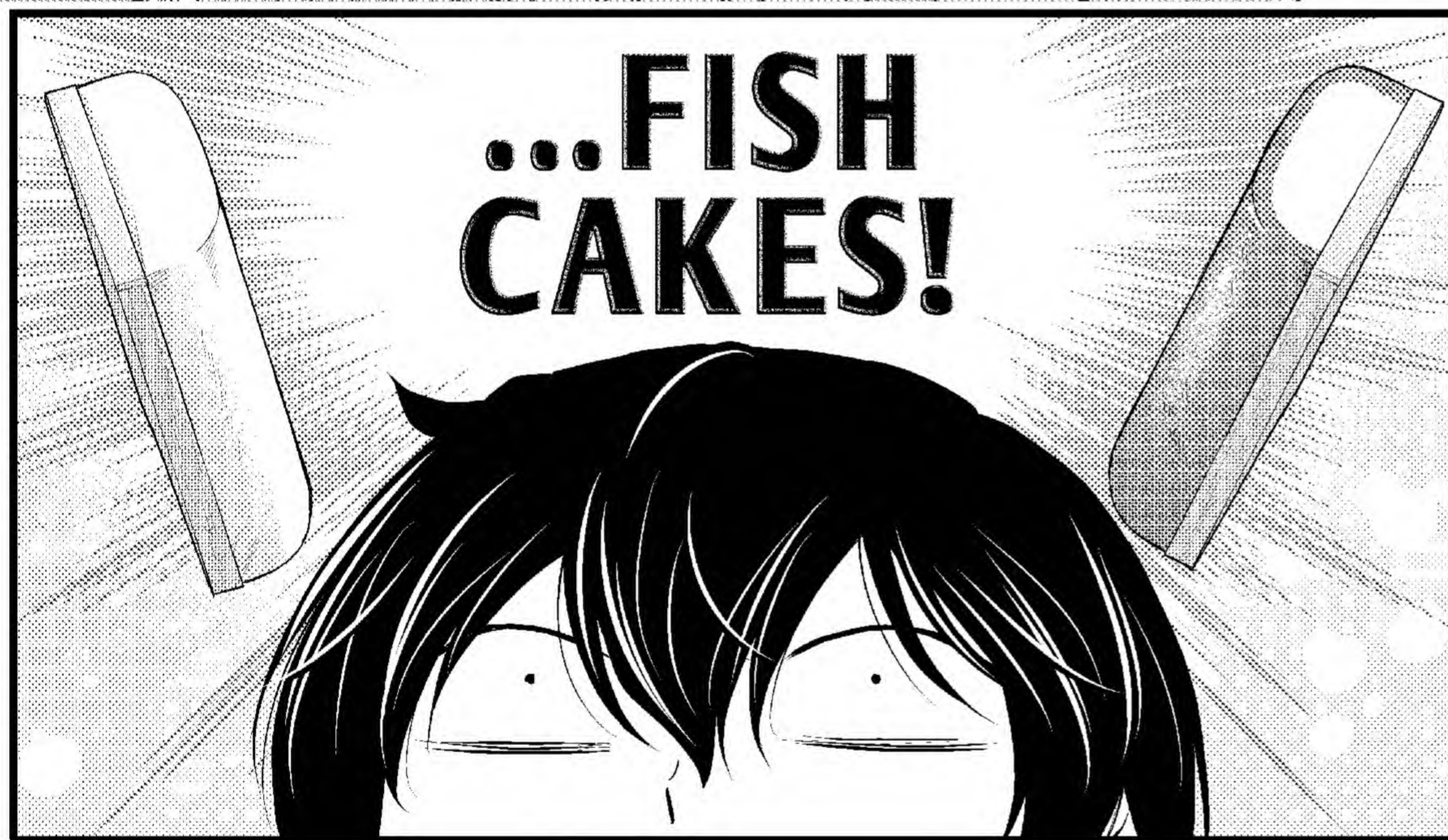
SHE'S  
SWEATING  
A LITTLE.



YEAH  
...

RUI'S  
BLUSHING.









I MIGHT  
FINISH MY  
DRAFT BY  
THE END OF  
TODAY...

AT  
THIS  
RATE,

EVERY  
TIME I  
TOUCH  
YOU,

SOFT  
TWIN  
MOUNDS  
...

MY  
IMAGINATION  
RUNS WILD  
AND FILLS MY  
HEAD WITH  
IDEAS.



A PINK  
SUMMIT,  
STANDING  
LIKE A  
RADIANT  
SHRINE OF  
THE GODS.

ALMOST  
LIKE...



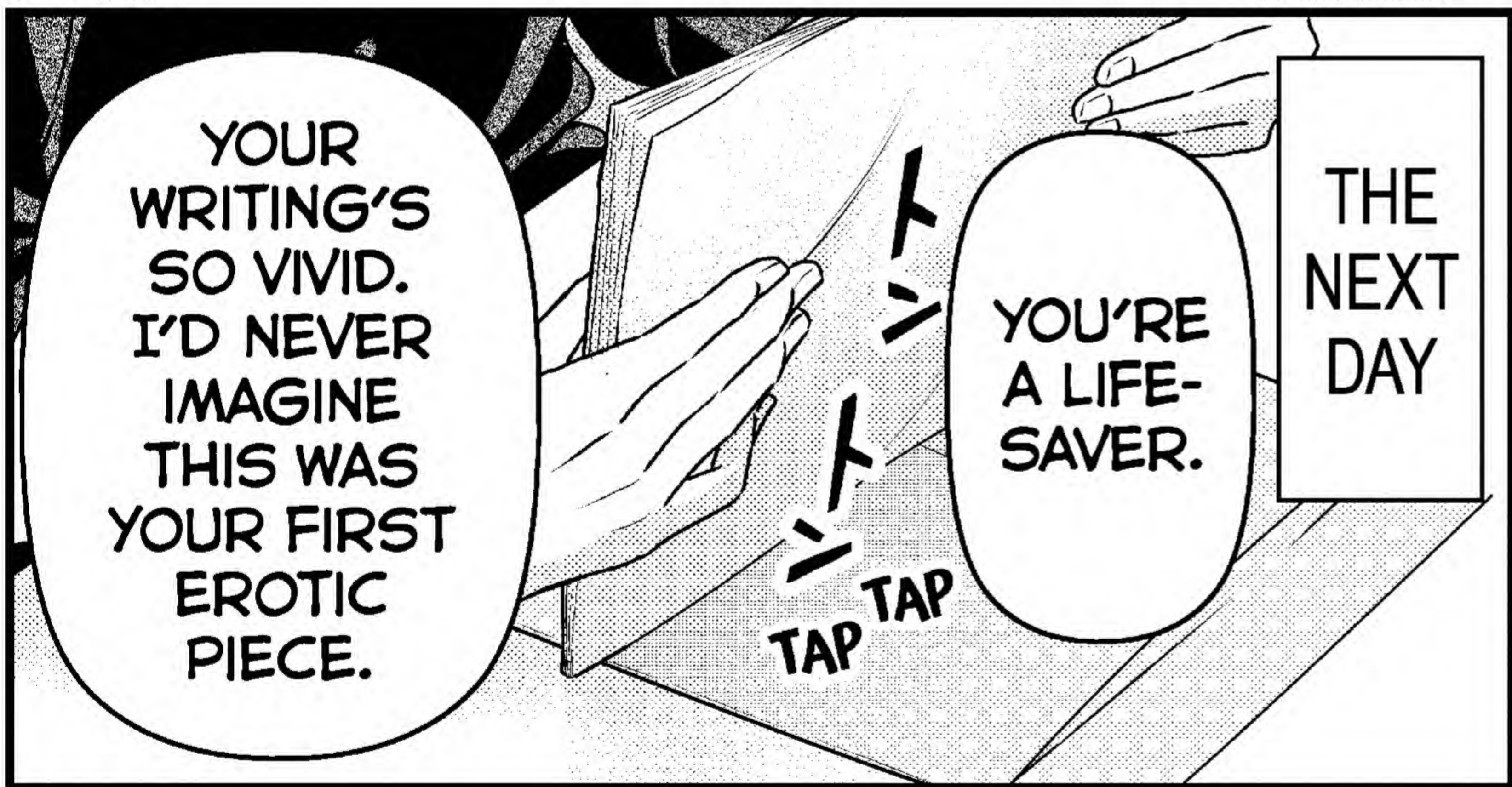
I FEEL AS  
THOUGH  
THEY MIGHT  
BURST IF I  
POKED THEM  
TOO HARD,  
LIKE WATER  
BALLOONS.

AND AT  
THE CREST  
OF THESE  
IRRESISTIBLE  
MOUNDS LIE  
EVEN MORE  
SUPPLE  
KNOLLS.





**...FRUIT  
GUMMIES!  
(PEACH  
FLAVORED)**

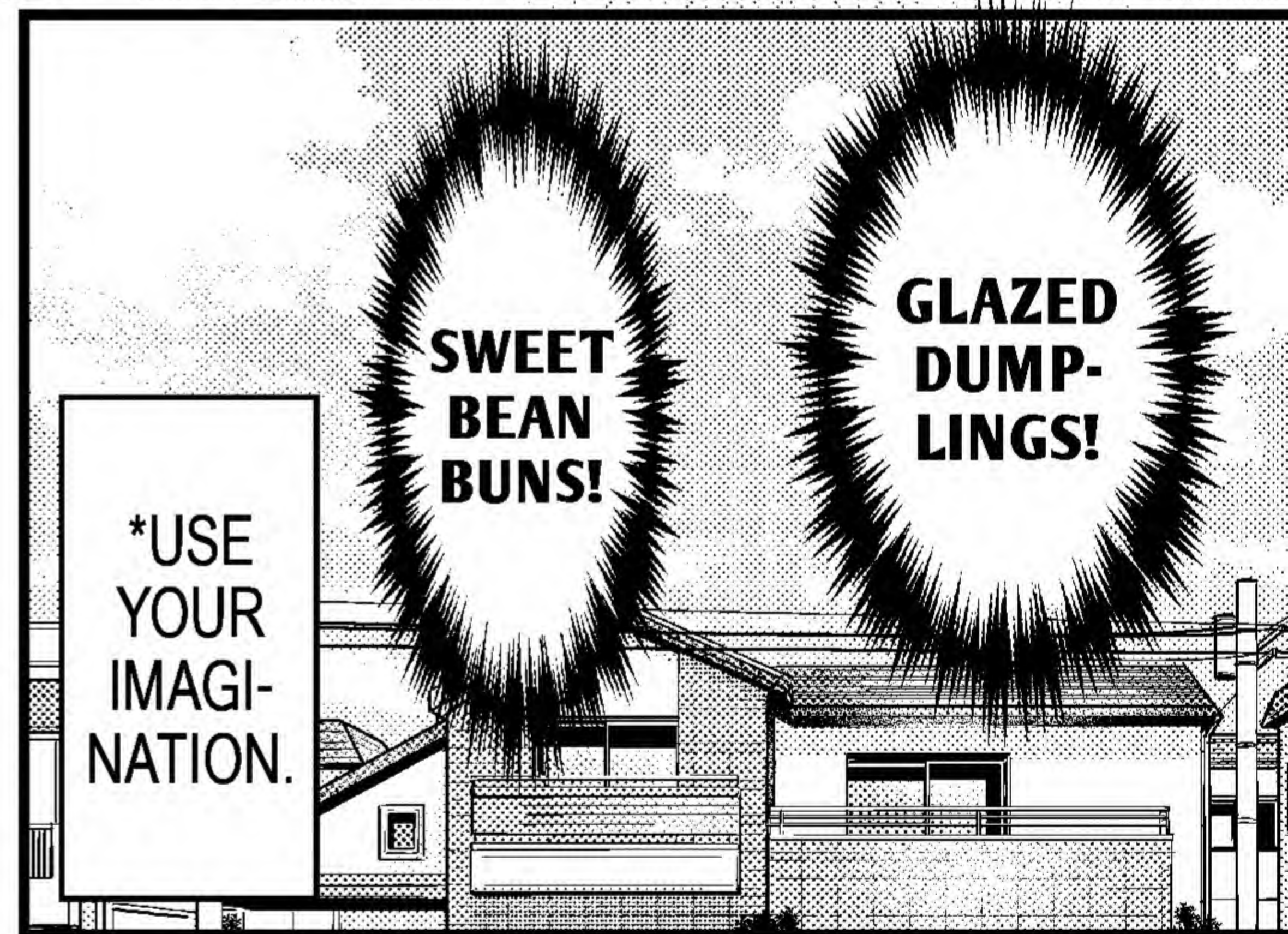


YOUR  
WRITING'S  
SO VIVID.  
I'D NEVER  
IMAGINE  
THIS WAS  
YOUR FIRST  
EROTIC  
PIECE.

YOU'RE  
A LIFE-  
SAVER.

THE  
NEXT  
DAY

TAP TAP



SWEET  
BEAN  
BUNS!

GLAZED  
DUMP-  
LINGS!

\*USE  
YOUR  
IMAGI-  
NATION.



WHY  
DON'T WE  
ADD A LITTLE  
VARIETY  
TO YOUR  
EXPRES-  
SIONS?

I THINK  
IT'D BE MORE  
VIVID FOR  
READERS IF I  
USED FAMILIAR  
EXAMPLES!

BUT WHY DO  
ALL YOUR  
METAPHORS  
HAVE TO DO  
WITH FOOD?

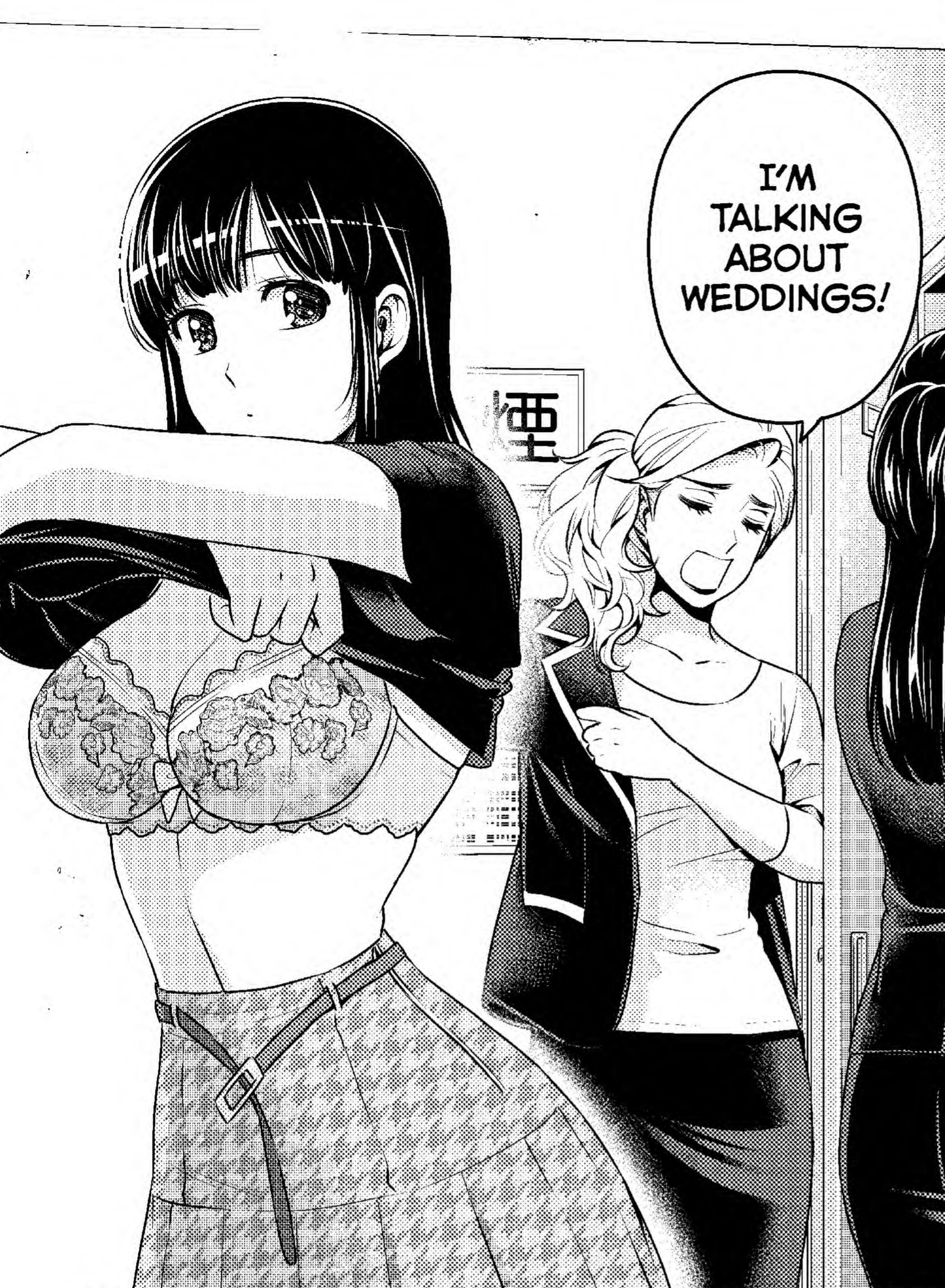
HUH  
?





## CHAPTER 173: LIFE DECISIONS





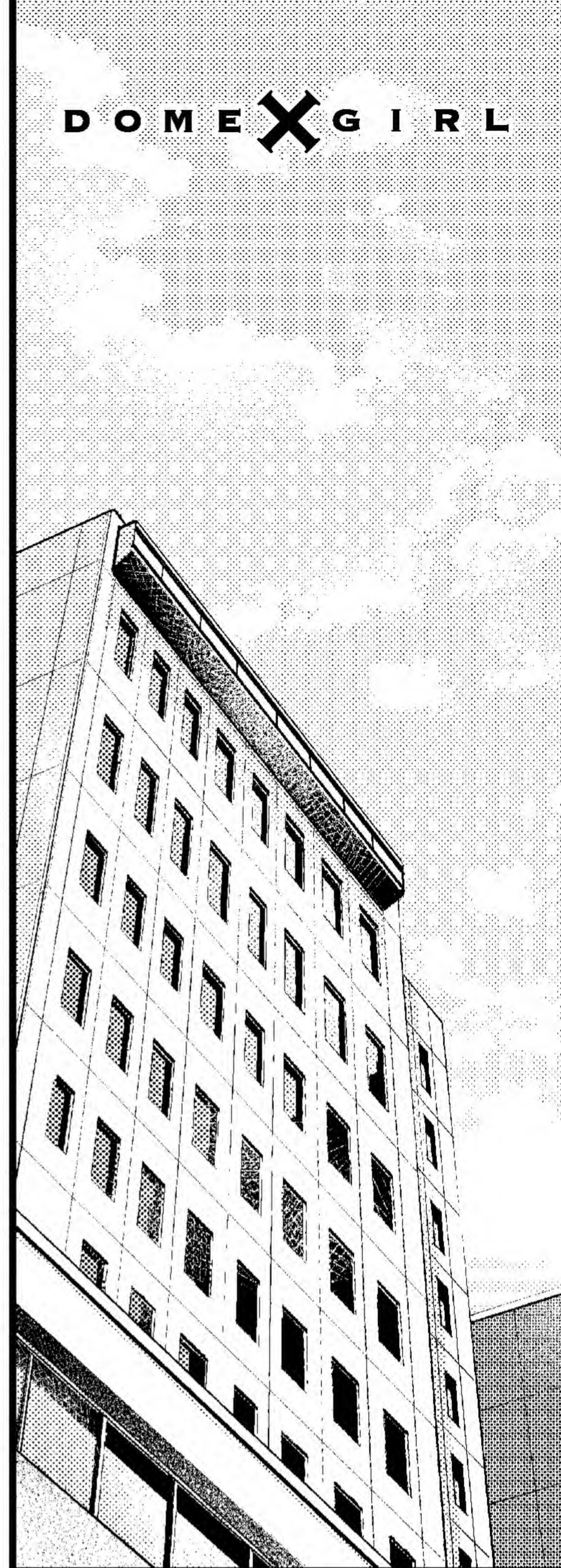
I'M TALKING ABOUT WEDDINGS!

THIS IS THE FIFTH ONE THIS YEAR, YOU KNOW! THE FIFTH!

I'M LOSING MY MIND ...

STAFF ROOM

FIFTH WHAT ?



KENGO TANABE ...

Good morning! ☀  
Hot morning, isn't it?  
A co-worker told me about a good Japanese restaurant yesterday. Would you like to go this evening?  
I hear they have good drinks, too.  
You said you get off early on Thursdays, right?  
Hope to hear back from you soon (^^)



WELL, LOOK AT IT THIS WAY. IT'LL ALL COME BACK WHEN YOU GET MARRIED.

THAT'S DEPRESSING, BECAUSE I DON'T SEE IT HAPPENING ANYTIME SOON!



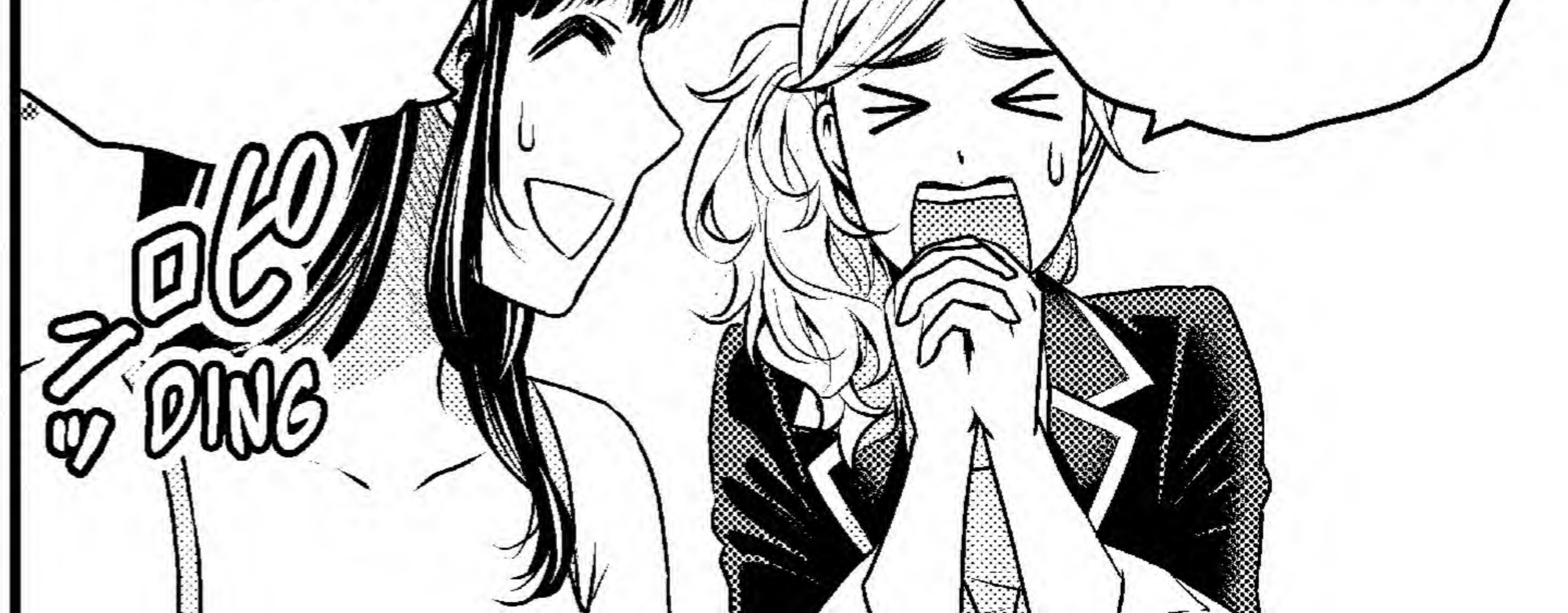
GETTING A GIFT EACH TIME IS REALLY STARTING TO ADD UP,

AND I CAN'T JUST WEAR THE SAME DRESS OVER AND OVER, EITHER.

DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT PLANNING ON IT, EITHER!

I'M GONNA GO BROKE AT THIS RATE!

TACHIBANA-CHAN, IF YOU GET MARRIED, PLEASE DON'T MAKE IT THIS YEAR, OKAY?!





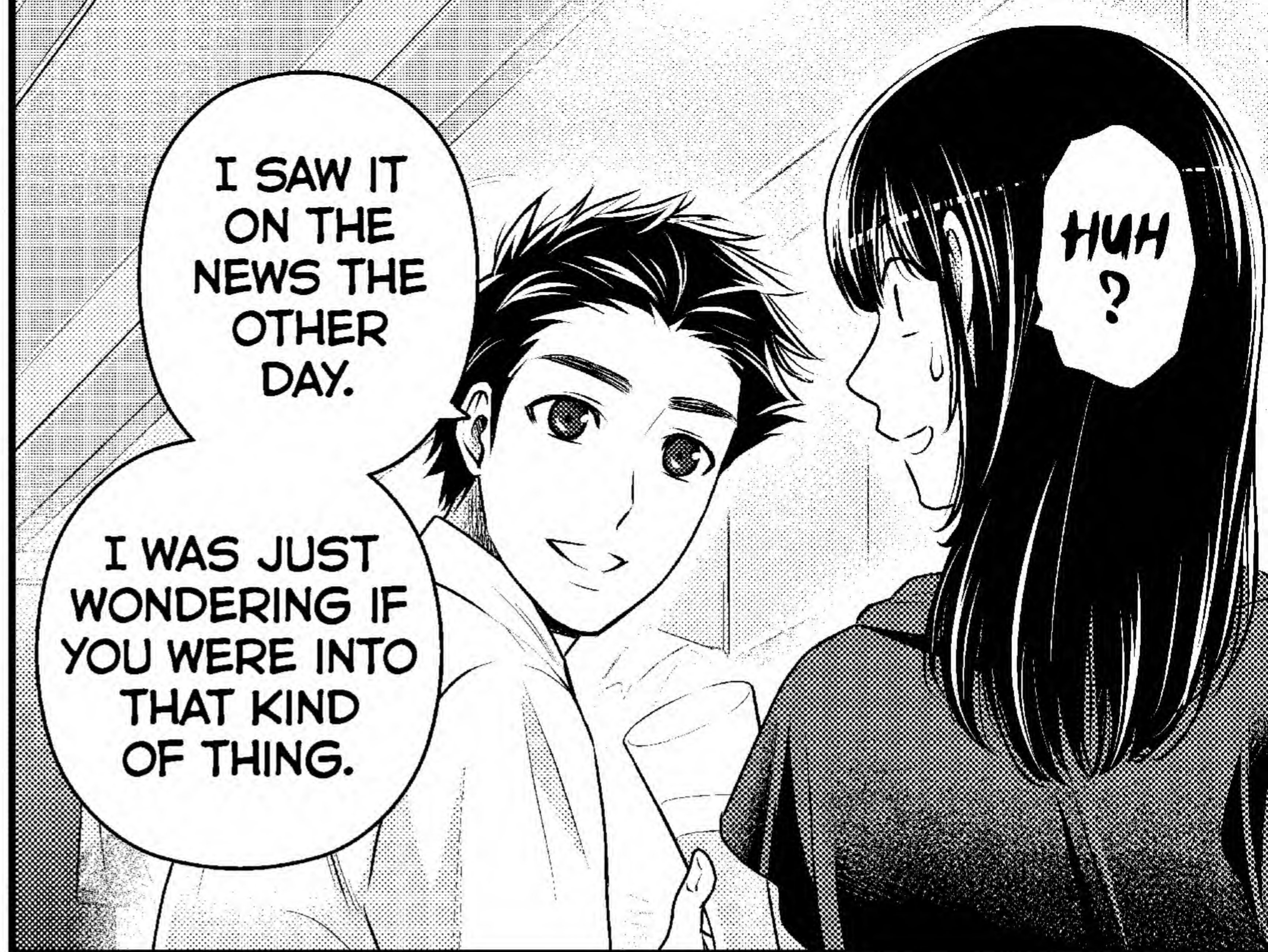






UH...

UM...



I SAW IT  
ON THE  
NEWS THE  
OTHER  
DAY.

I WAS JUST  
WONDERING IF  
YOU WERE INTO  
THAT KIND  
OF THING.

HUH  
?



WE DIDN'T  
STICK  
AROUND  
FOR VERY  
LONG,  
THOUGH...



YES!

I...I LIKE  
TO GO TO  
FESTIVALS  
WITH MY  
FAMILY!

ACTUALLY, I  
RAN INTO MY  
STEPBROTHER  
ON THE WAY  
HOME THE  
OTHER DAY,  
AND WE WENT  
TO WATCH THE  
FIREWORKS!

HMM.  
THAT'S  
NICE.



...

OH, RIGHT.  
LET ME  
GIVE YOU  
SOMETHING  
BEFORE I  
FORGET.



I HAVE TO  
SAY, I'M  
A LITTLE  
JEALOUS  
OF HIM...

...FOR  
HAVING  
A PRETTY  
SISTER  
LIKE YOU.



YOUR  
STEP-  
BROTHER  
IS IN  
COLLEGE,  
ISN'T HE?

I BET YOU  
REALLY  
LOOK LIKE  
A COUPLE  
WHEN YOU'RE  
TOGETHER.





HIGH HEELS.

YOU BROKE YOURS THE OTHER DAY, REMEMBER?

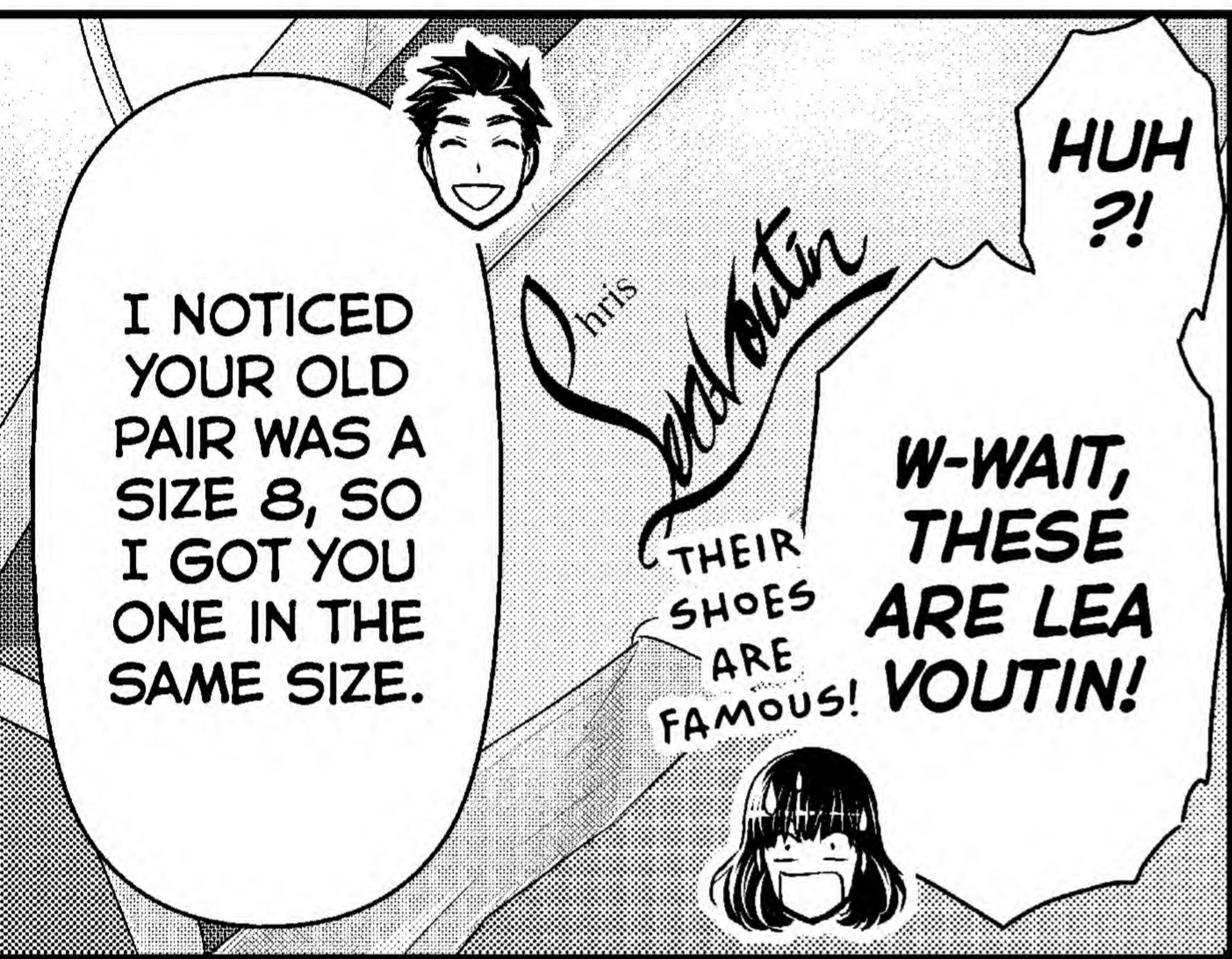
HM?

WHAT'S THIS?



HERE.

I HOPE YOU LIKE THEM.



I NOTICED YOUR OLD PAIR WAS A SIZE 8, SO I GOT YOU ONE IN THE SAME SIZE.

HUH?!  
W-WAIT, THESE ARE LEA VOUTIN!

THEIR SHOES ARE FAMOUS!



BE-SIDES,  
A WOMAN YOUR AGE DESERVES TO WEAR NICE THINGS.



AND I'LL HAVE TO GO RETURN THEM IF YOU DON'T TAKE THEM.

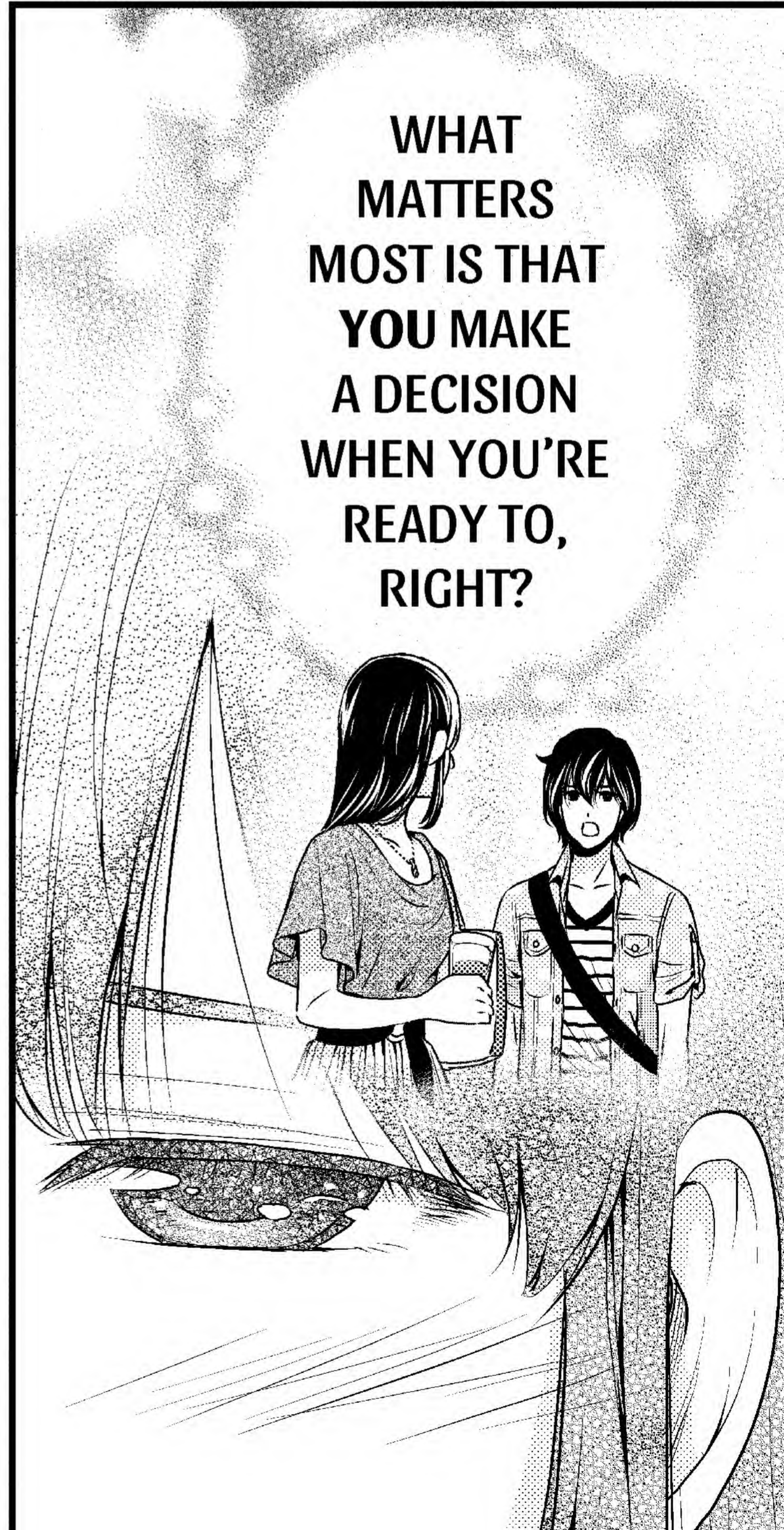
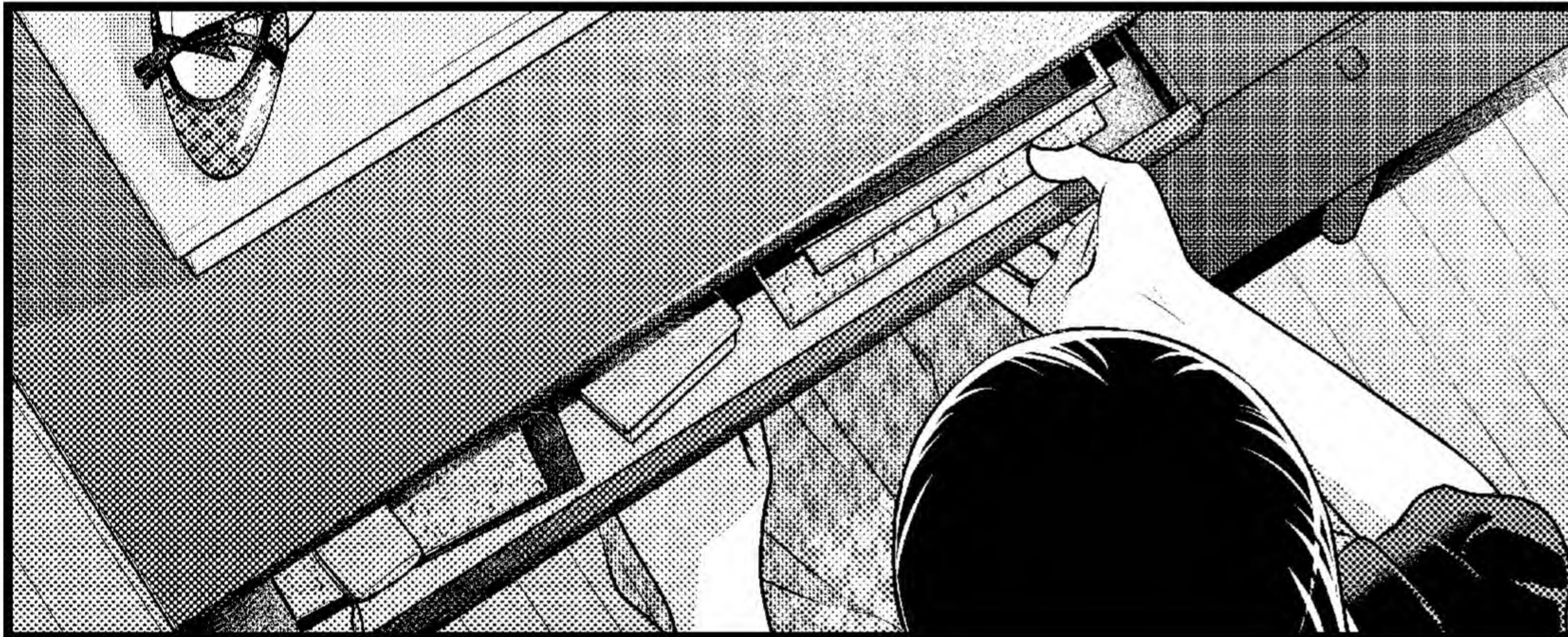
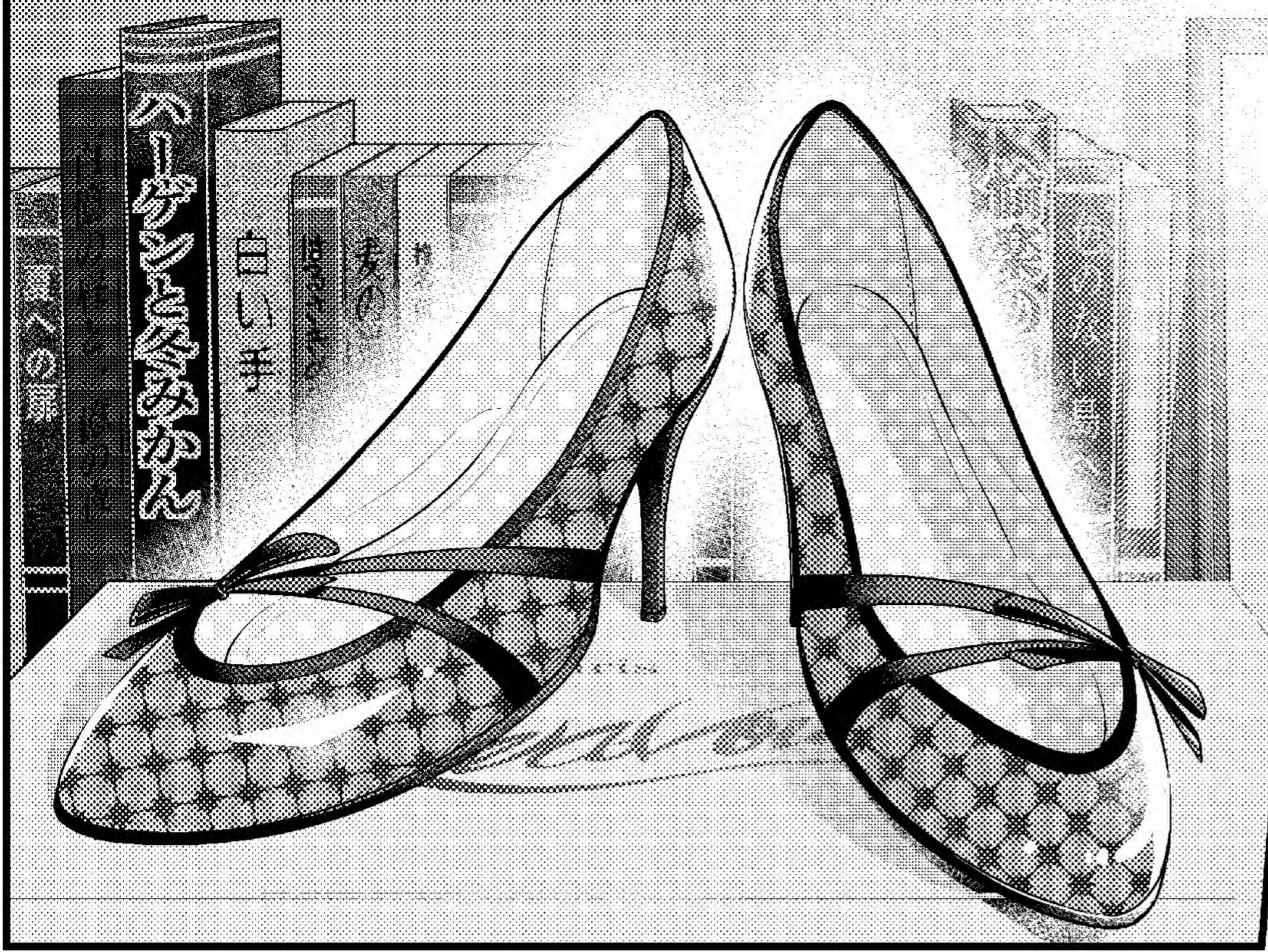
DON'T MAKE ME BE THE SAD CHUMP WHOSE GIFT GOT REJECTED, OKAY?



NO, NO, NO!  
I CAN'T ACCEPT SOMETHING THIS EXPENSIVE!

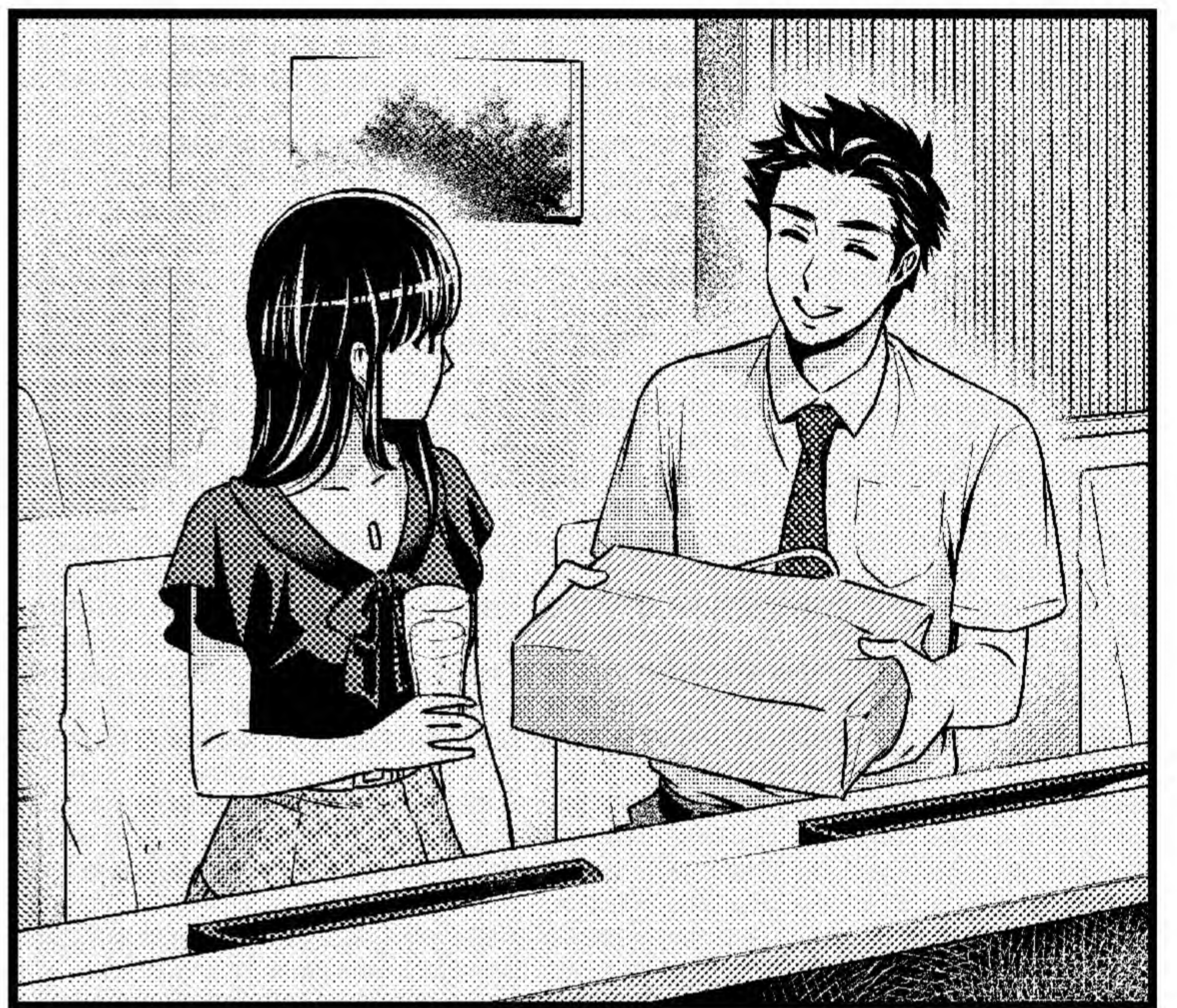
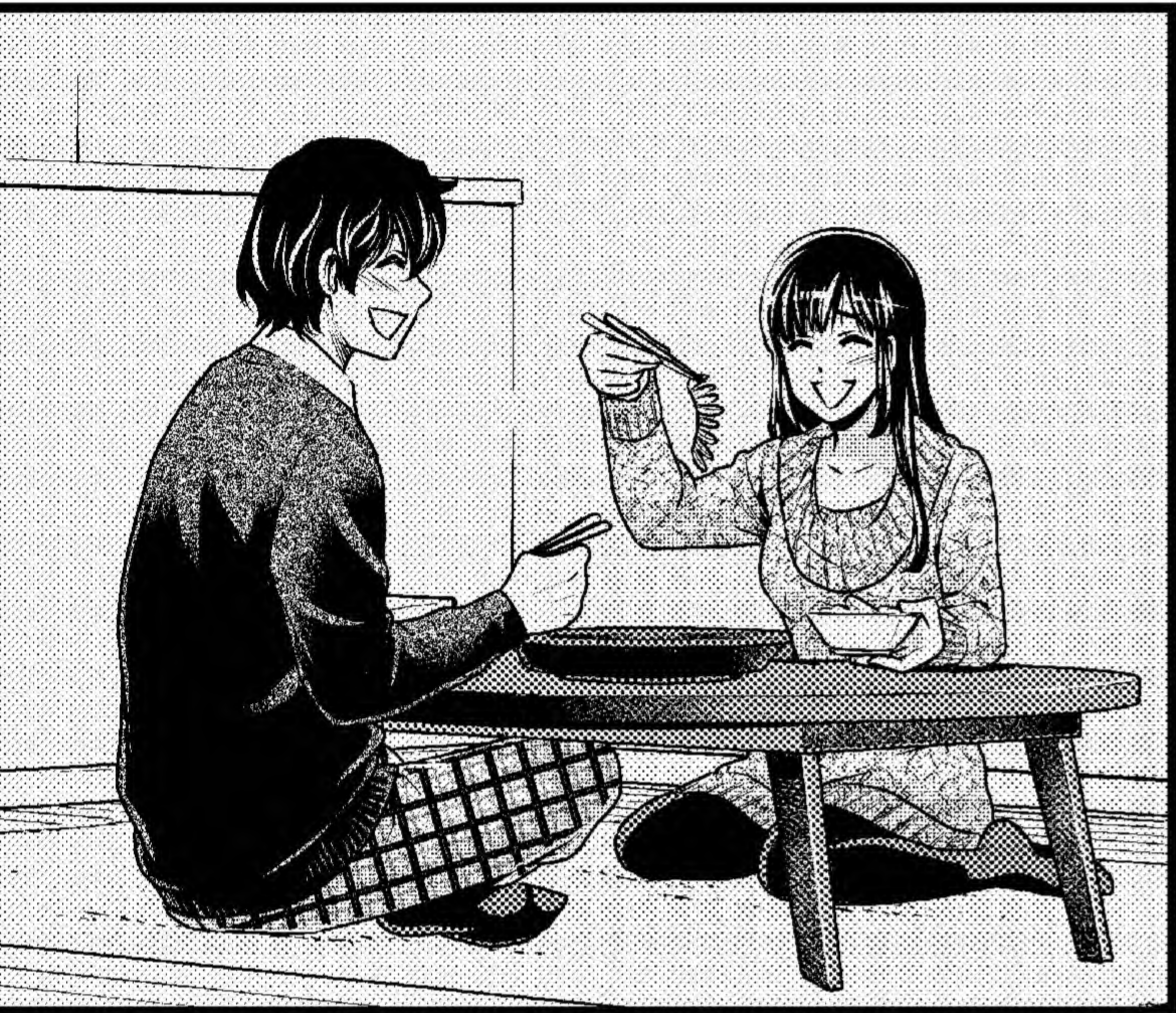
THEY WEREN'T THAT PRICEY.





WHAT  
MATTERS  
MOST IS THAT  
YOU MAKE  
A DECISION  
WHEN YOU'RE  
READY TO,  
RIGHT?





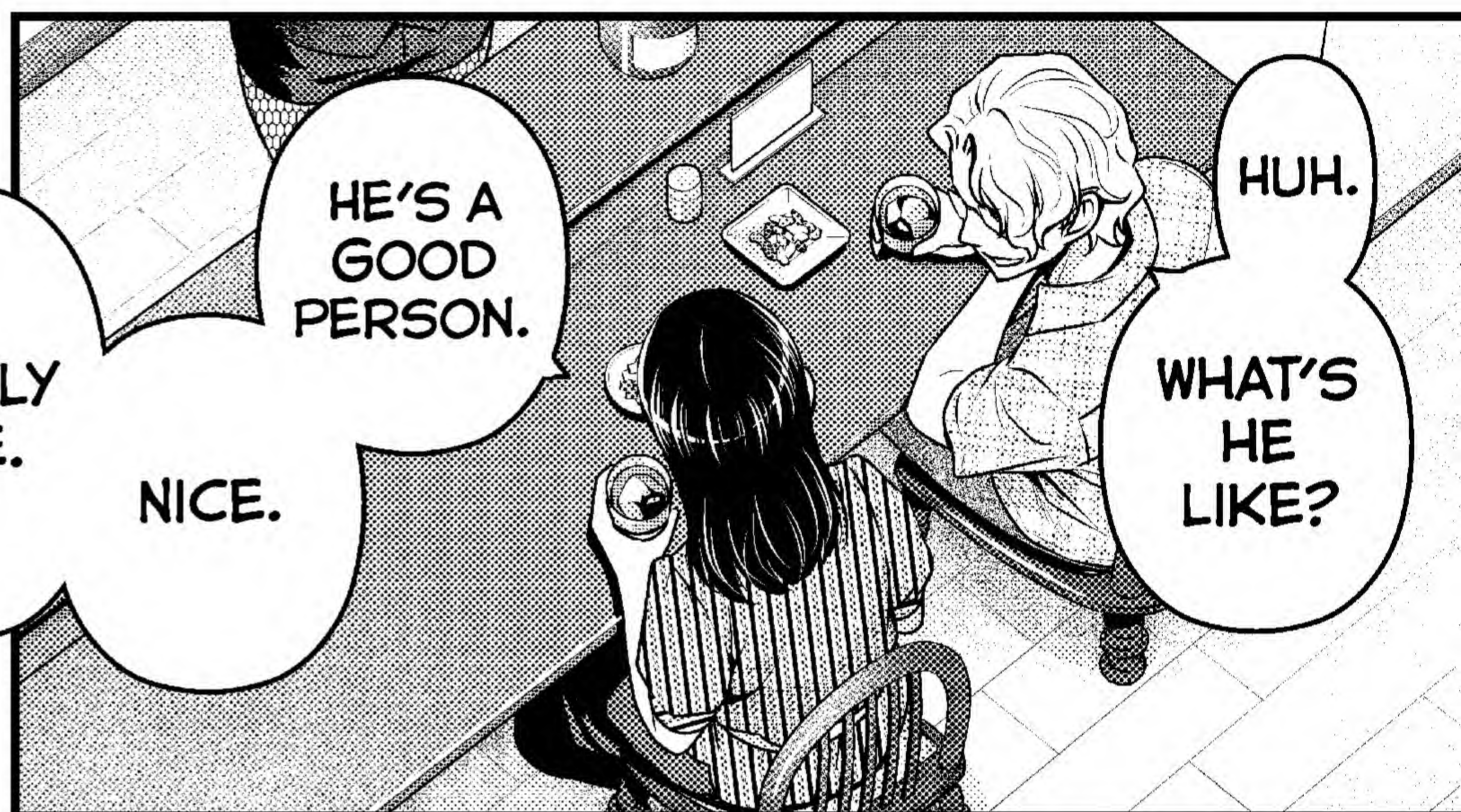
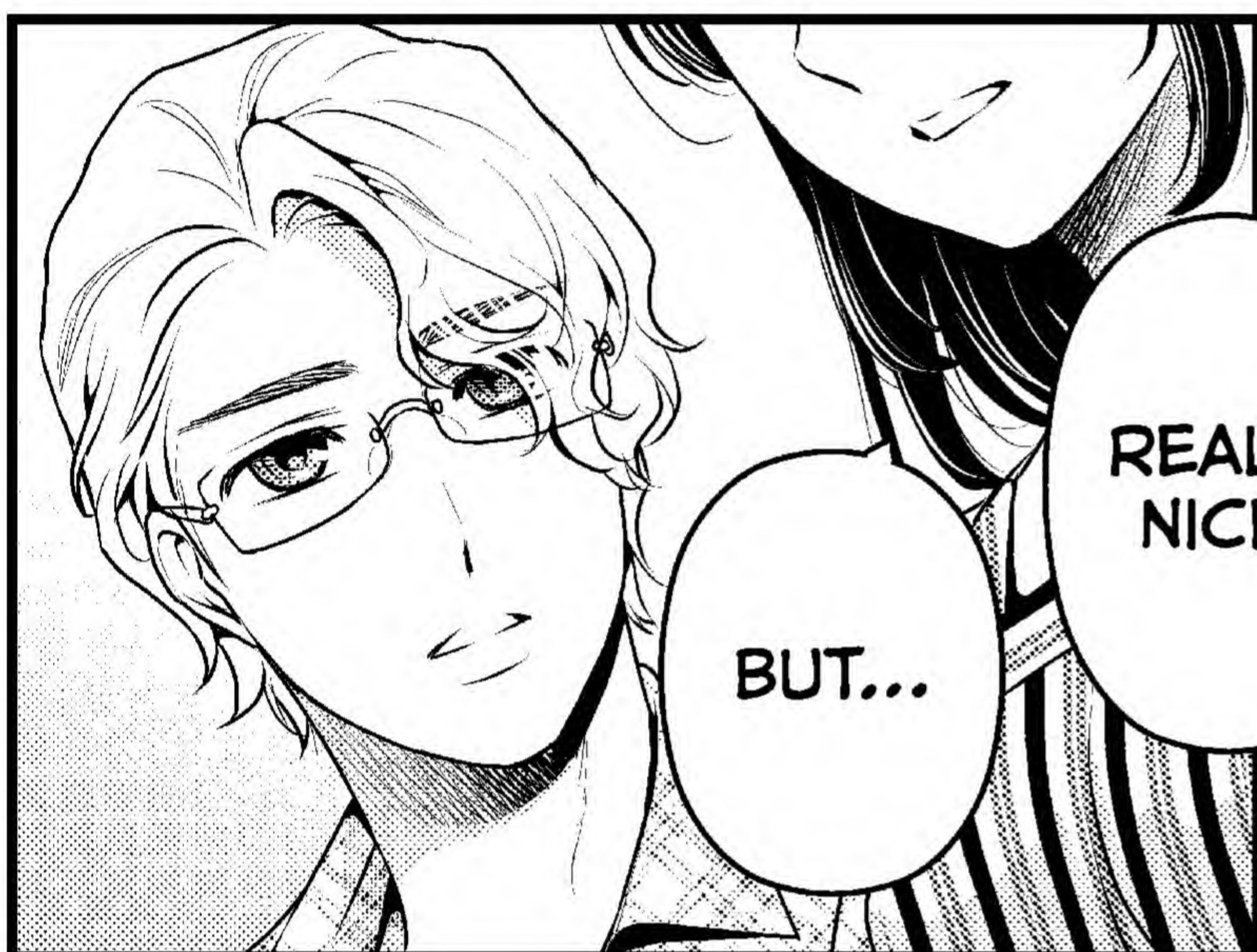














I THOUGHT  
YOU WERE  
ONLY  
SUFFERING  
SO MUCH  
BECAUSE  
YOUR FEEL-  
INGS WERE  
SO STRONG,

AND THAT  
BEING  
RELEASED  
FROM THEM  
WOULD  
EASE THE  
PAIN.



FROM MY  
PERSPECTIVE,  
NATSUO-KUN'S  
VERY EXISTENCE  
SEEMED LIKE  
A CURSE  
FOLLOWING  
YOU AROUND  
WHEREVER  
YOU WENT.

HINA-  
CHAN.



AS YOU  
KNOW,

MY  
MARRIAGE  
WASN'T  
EXACTLY  
HAPPY.



BUT  
...

...I  
GUESS  
I WAS  
WRONG.



HINA-  
CHAN.

AND I  
THINK I  
KNOW WHY  
THAT IS  
NOW.

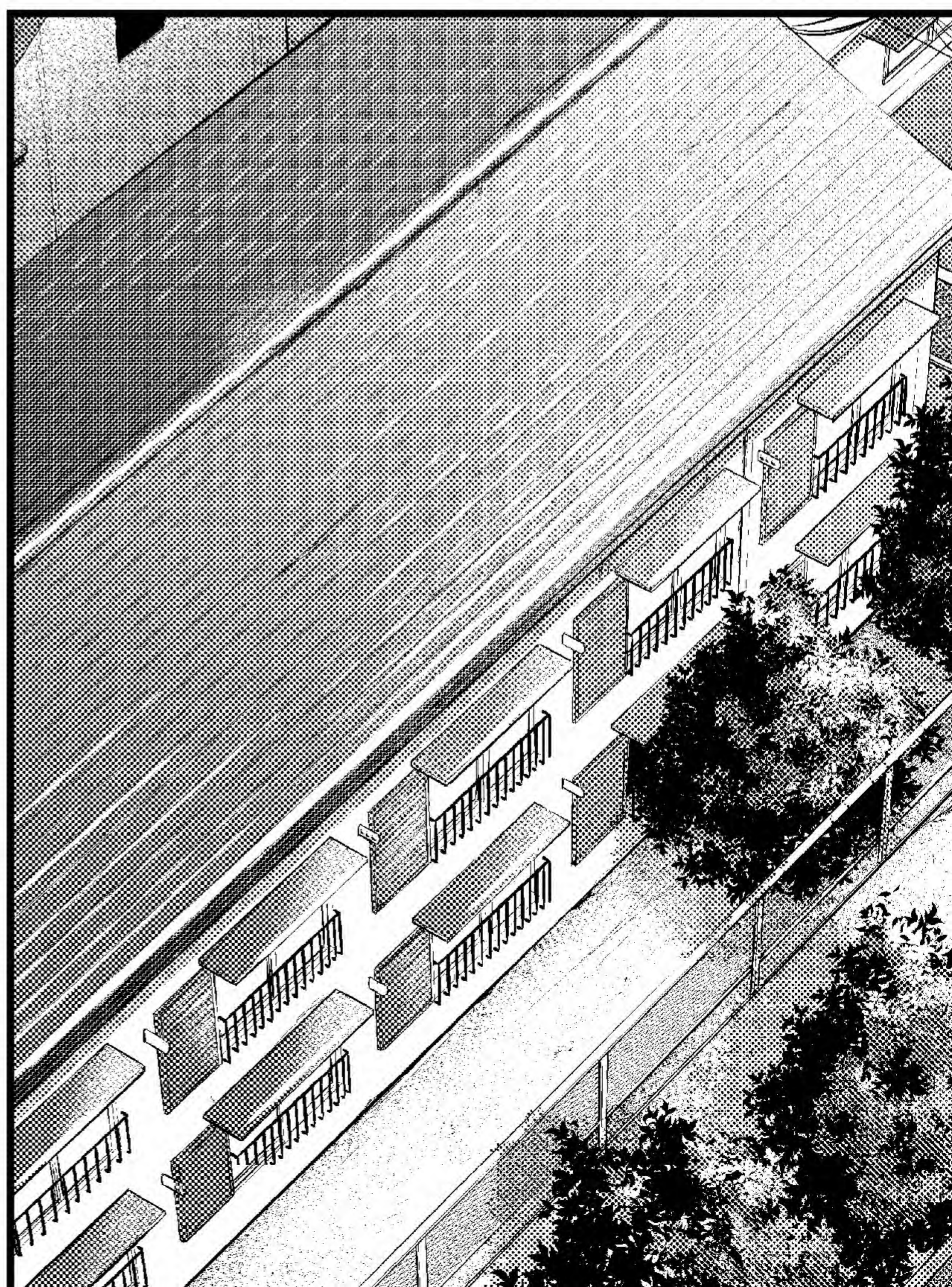
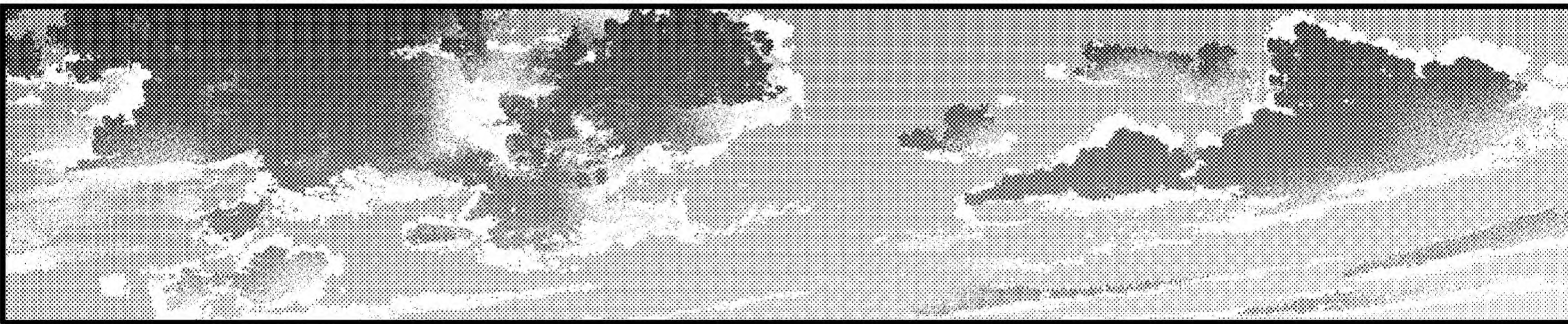


PEOPLE  
MARRY  
BECAUSE THEY  
WANT TO BE  
HAPPY, BUT  
SOMETIMES,  
IT JUST  
DOESN'T  
WORK OUT.

THINGS  
WERE  
ROCKY  
EVEN  
BEFORE I  
MET YOU  
AGAIN.



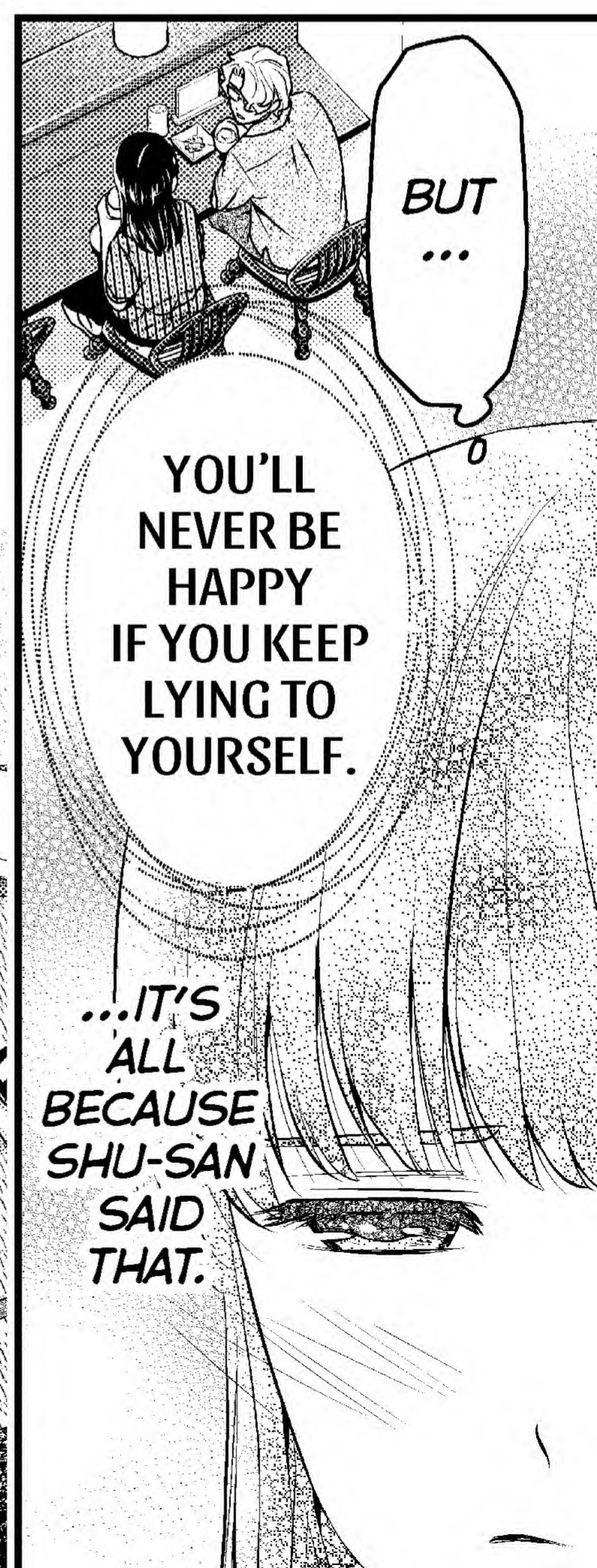












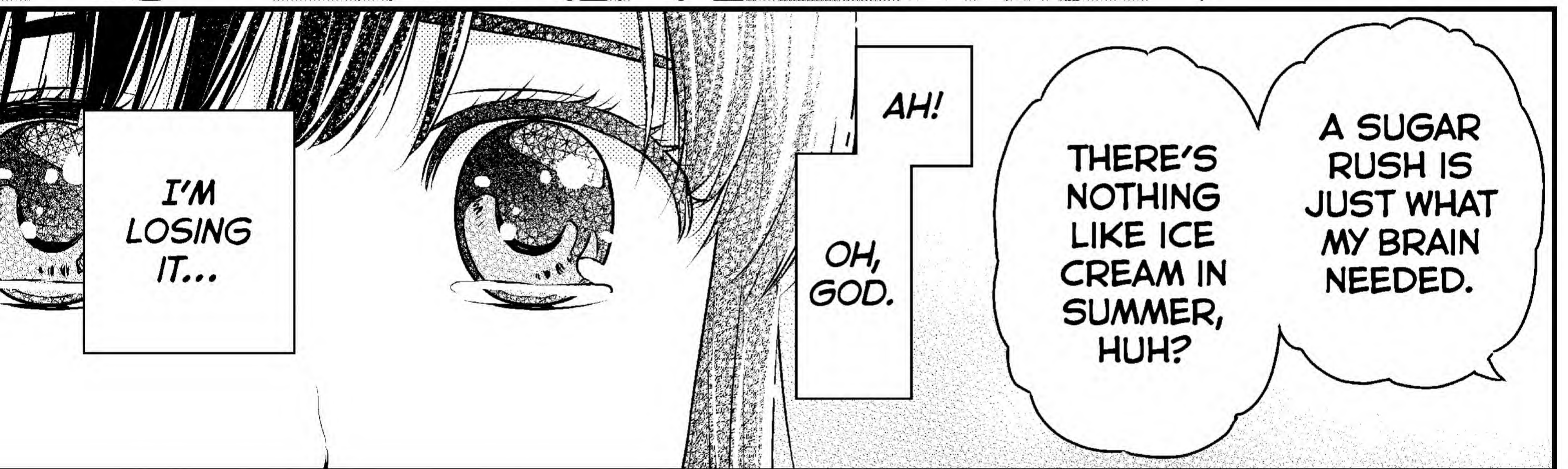




MAN,  
THAT'S  
GOOD!

AHH!

THANKS  
AGAIN!



I'M  
LOSING  
IT...

AH!

OH,  
GOD.

THERE'S  
NOTHING  
LIKE ICE  
CREAM IN  
SUMMER,  
HUH?

A SUGAR  
RUSH IS  
JUST WHAT  
MY BRAIN  
NEEDED.



I CAN'T  
MOVE  
ON LIKE  
THIS...

WHAT  
AM I  
DOING  
?



THAT  
WAS TOO  
CLOSE.

PHEW...

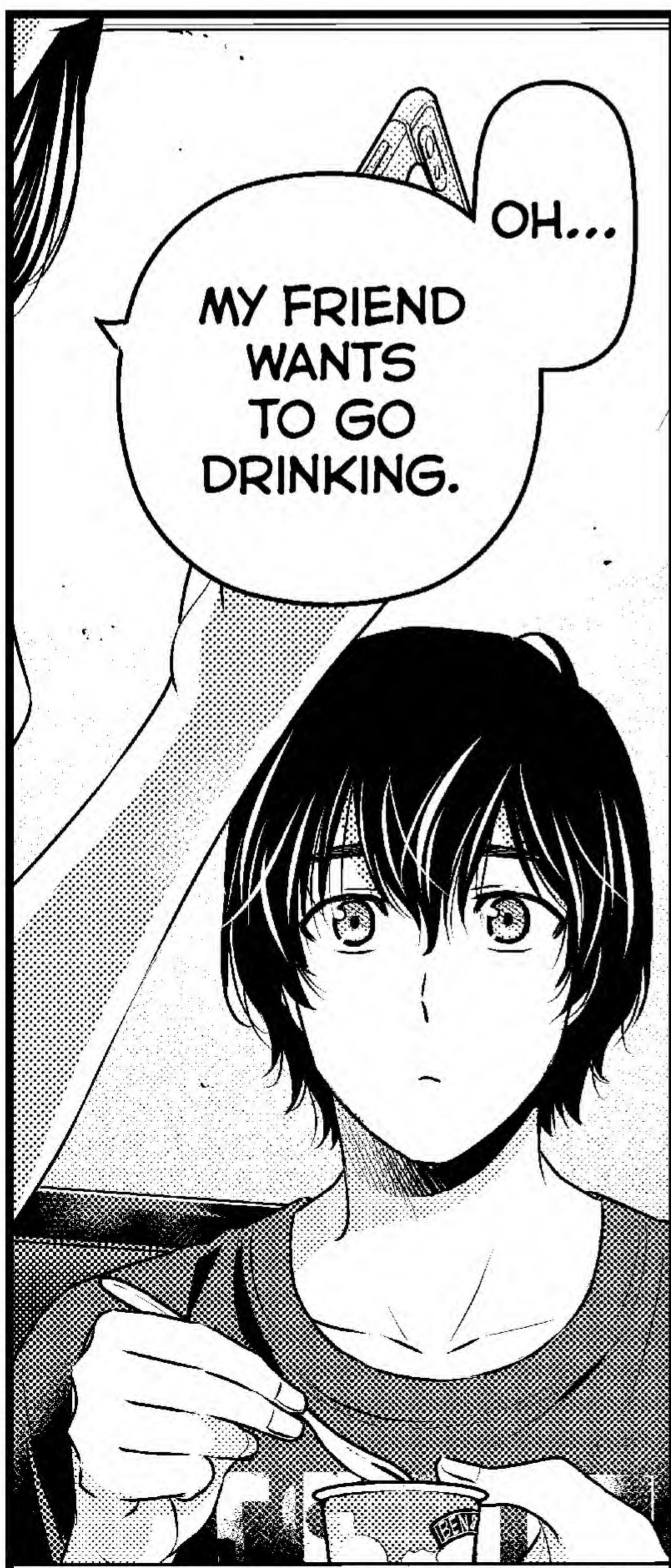
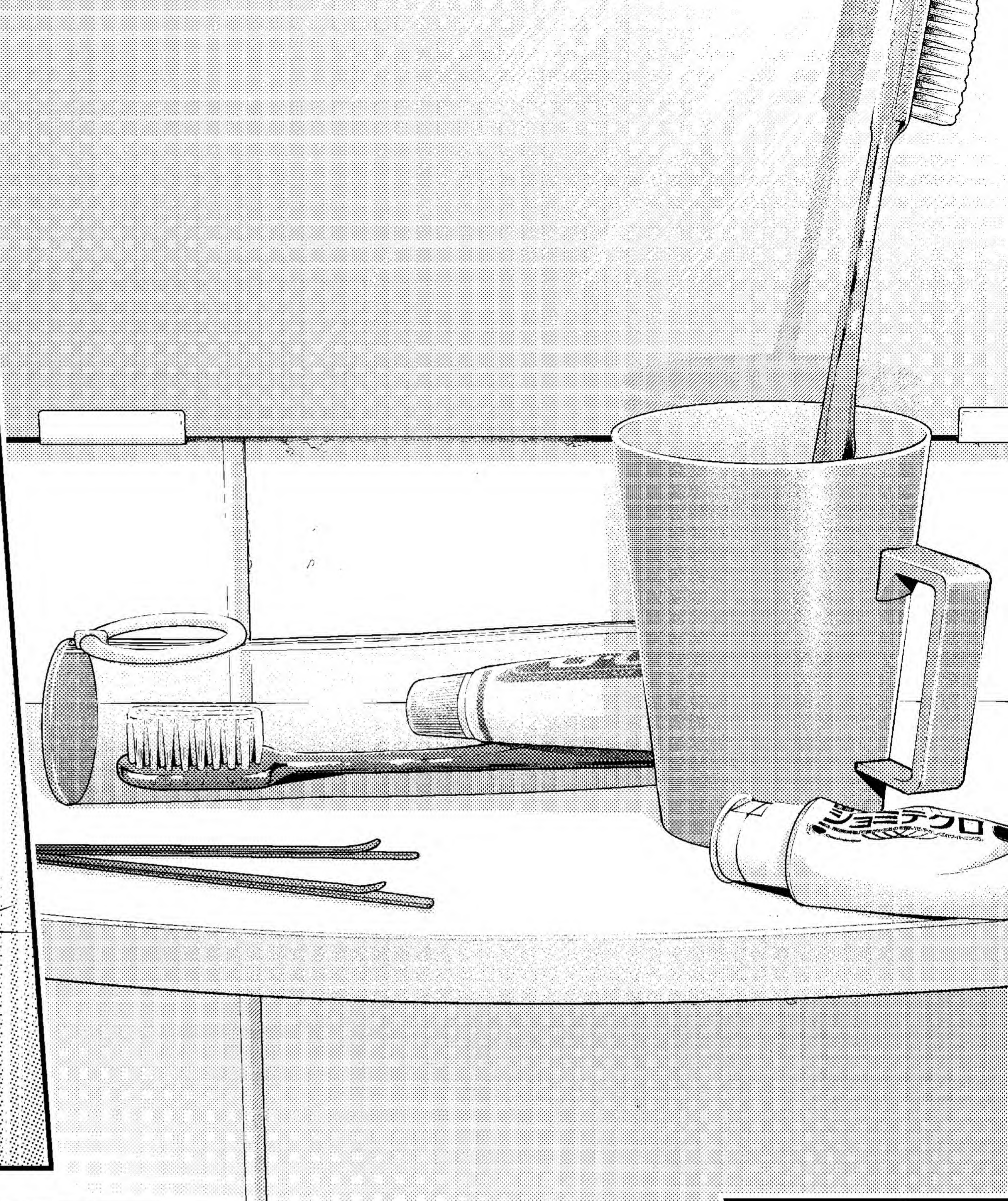


...OVER  
SOME-  
THING  
SO  
LITTLE.

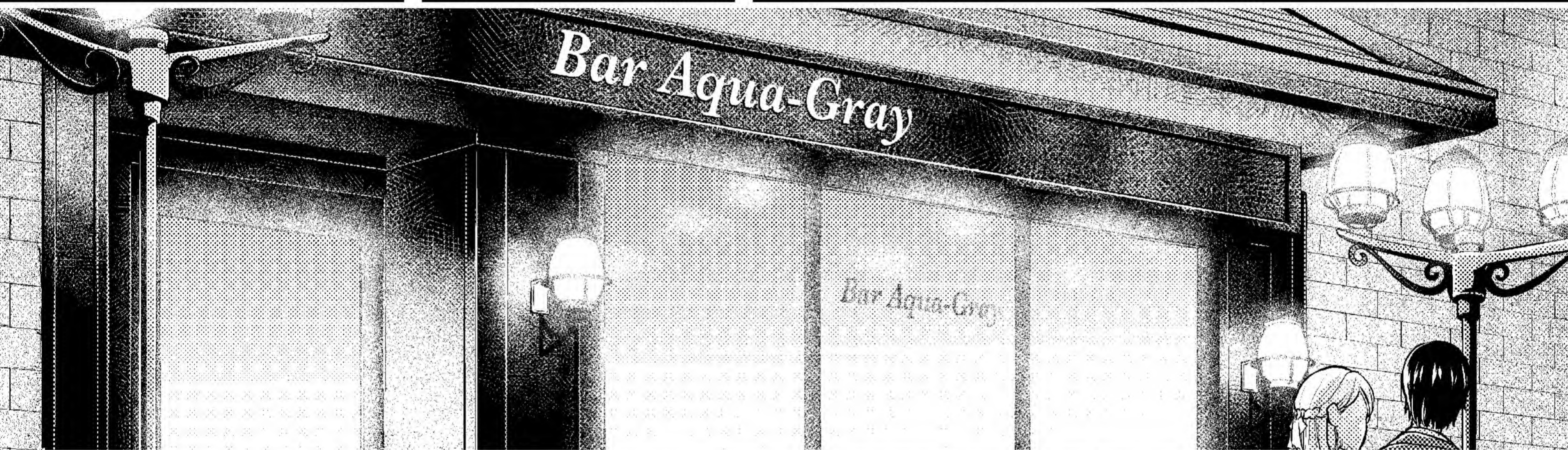
HERE  
COME  
THE  
TEARS.

I'M GONNA  
USE YOUR  
BATHROOM,  
OKAY?













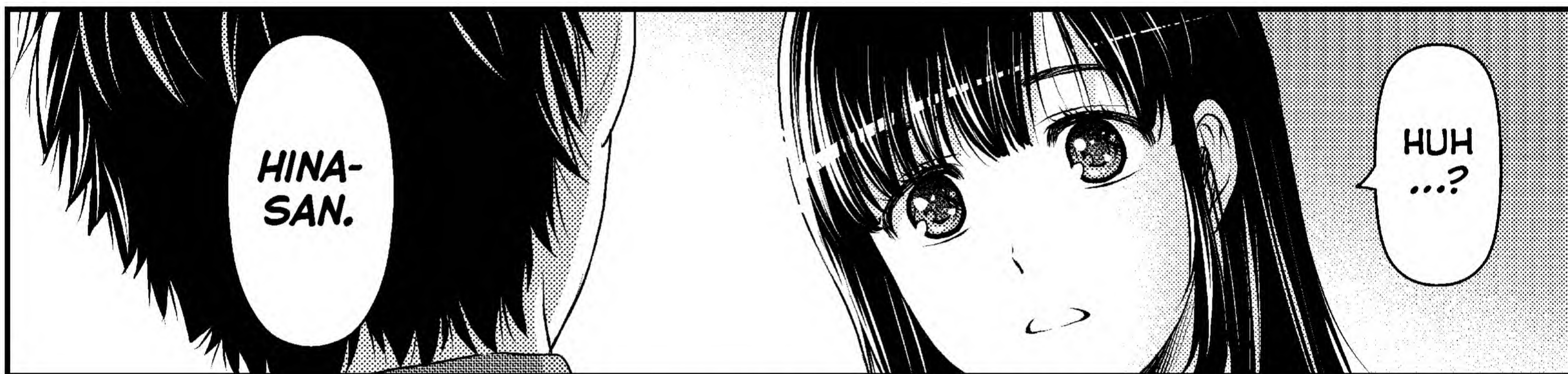
...IF YOU  
AGREED  
TO COME  
TONIGHT,  
I'D ASK  
YOU.

WHEN  
I SENT  
YOU THAT  
MESSAGE,  
I TOLD  
MYSELF...



THAT'S  
GOOD.

TO BE  
HONEST,  
THIS DATE  
WAS KIND  
OF A BIG  
DEAL  
FOR ME.



HINA-  
SAN.

HUH  
...?

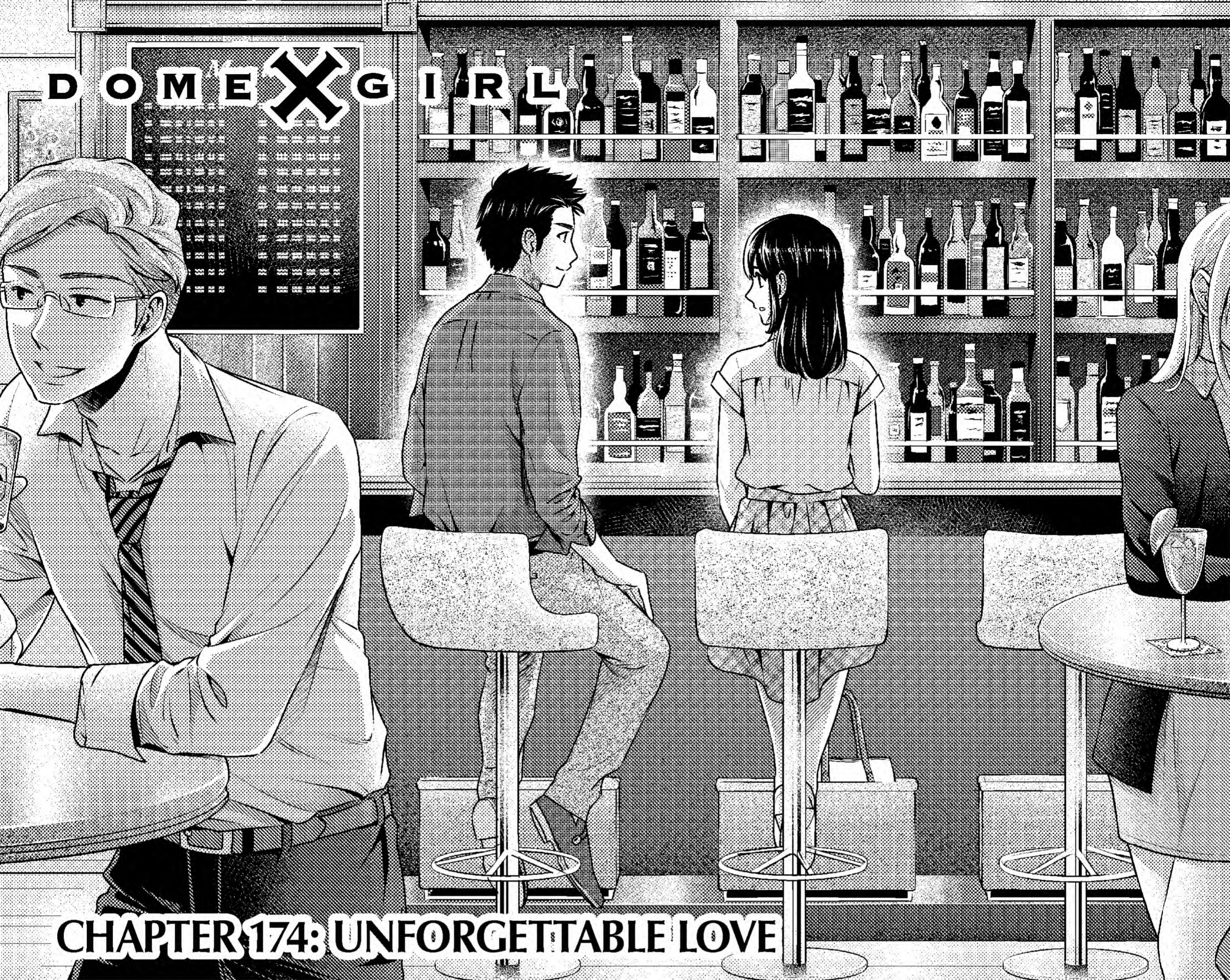


WOULD  
YOU...

...BE WILLING  
TO GO OUT  
WITH ME...

...WITH THE  
INTENTION OF  
EVENTUALLY  
GETTING  
MARRIED?





## CHAPTER 174: UNFORGETTABLE LOVE

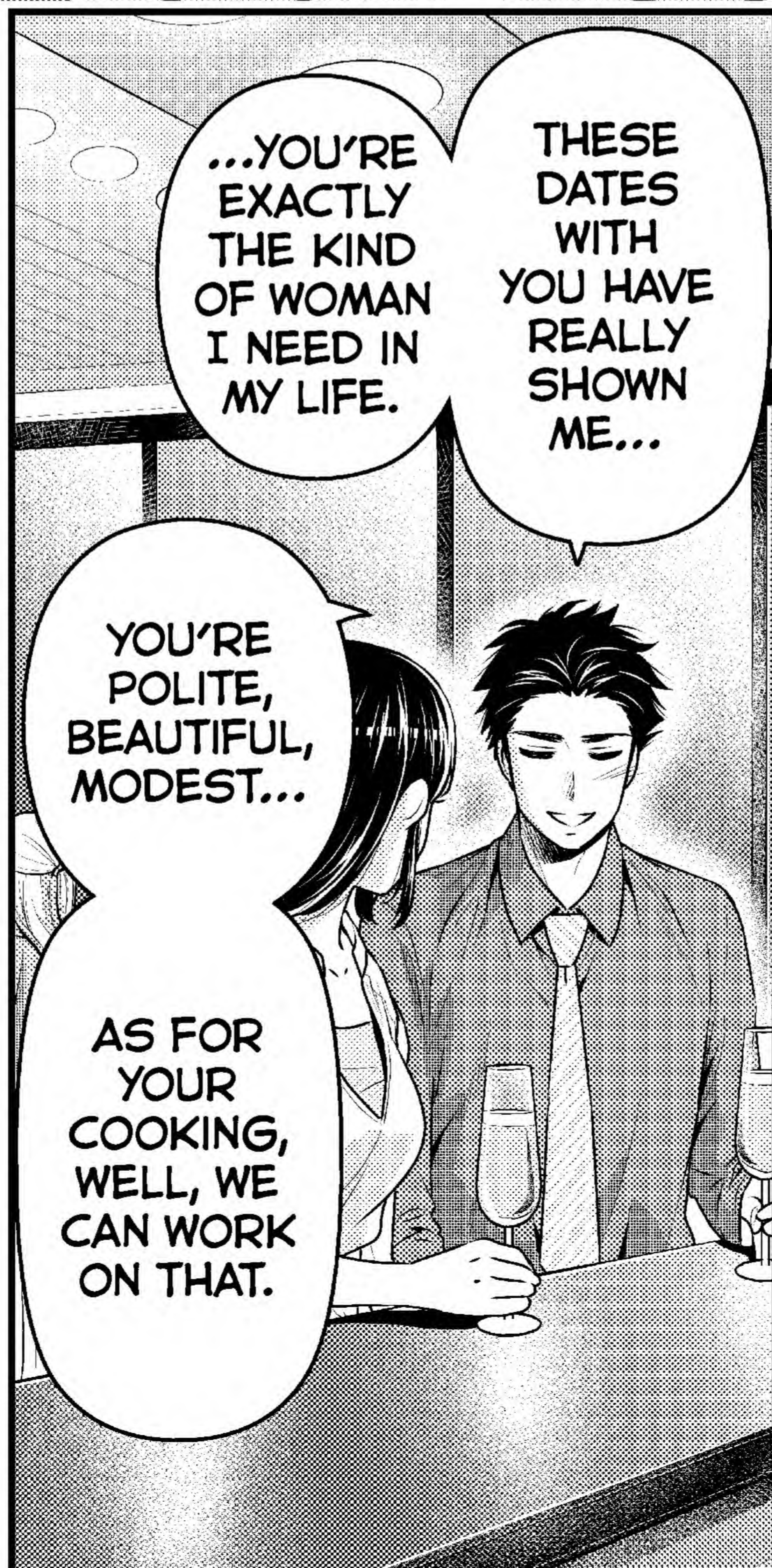


I FEEL  
THAT  
YOU'RE  
SOME-  
ONE...

...WHO'S  
WORTH  
MAKING  
HAPPY.



THANK  
YOU...



...YOU'RE  
EXACTLY  
THE KIND  
OF WOMAN  
I NEED IN  
MY LIFE.

THESE  
DATES  
WITH  
YOU HAVE  
REALLY  
SHOWN  
ME...

YOU'RE  
POLITE,  
BEAUTIFUL,  
MODEST...

AS FOR  
YOUR  
COOKING,  
WELL, WE  
CAN WORK  
ON THAT.







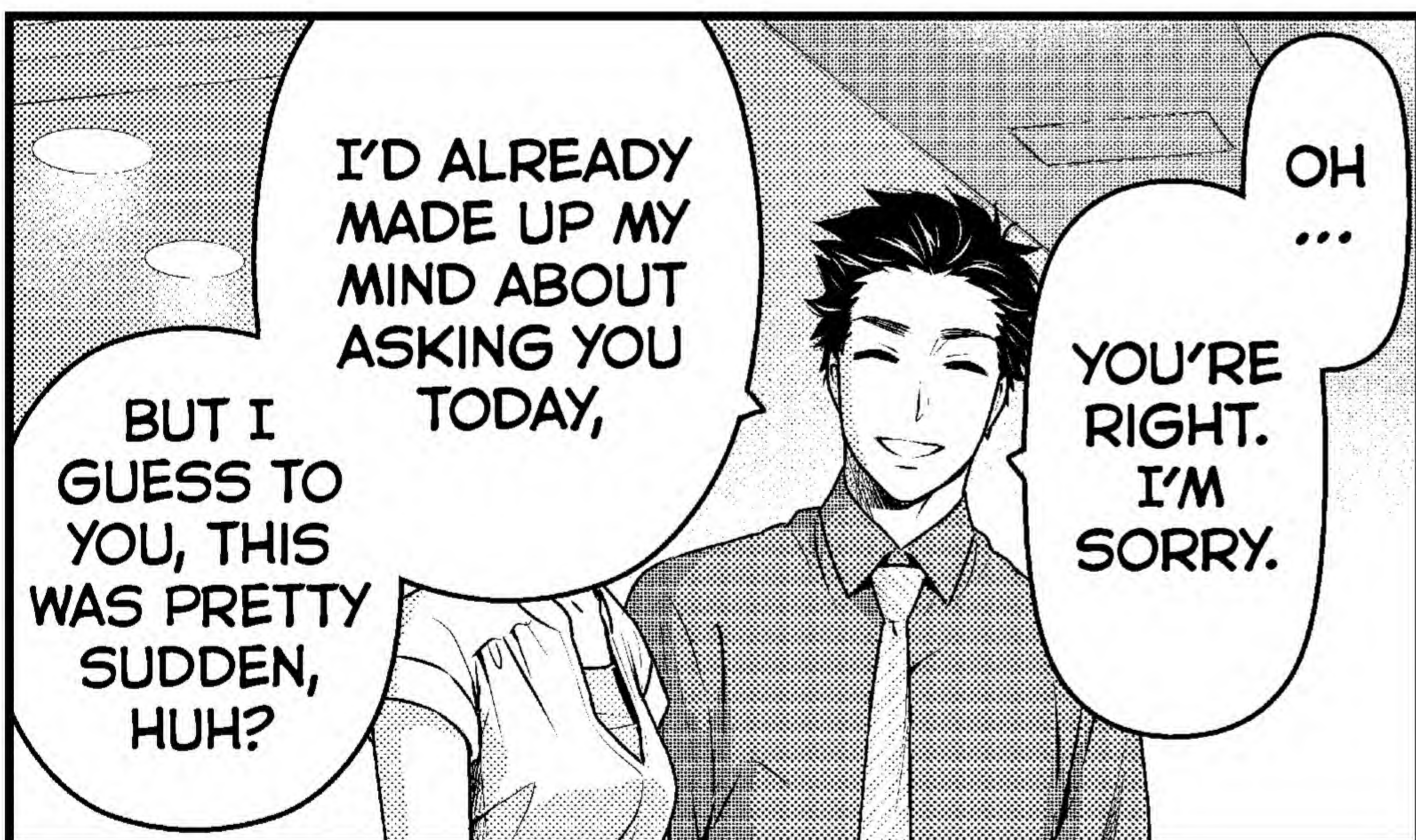
...HAVE  
SOME TIME  
TO THINK  
ABOUT IT,  
PLEASE?

MAY  
I...

BUT  
...



HUH  
?



BUT I  
GUESS TO  
YOU, THIS  
WAS PRETTY  
SUDDEN,  
HUH?

I'D ALREADY  
MADE UP MY  
MIND ABOUT  
ASKING YOU  
TODAY,

YOU'RE  
RIGHT.  
I'M  
SORRY.

OH  
...



SORRY.  
I'M JUST  
A LITTLE  
SURPRISED.

UM...

I WASN'T  
REALLY  
PREPARED  
TO HEAR  
ALL THIS.

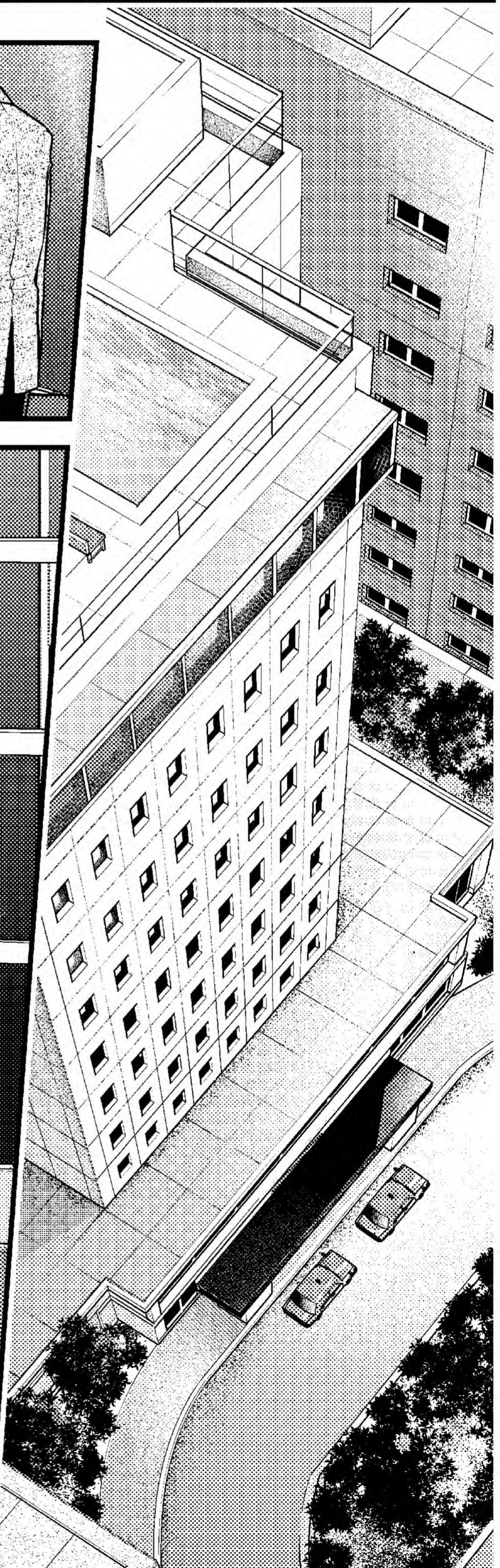
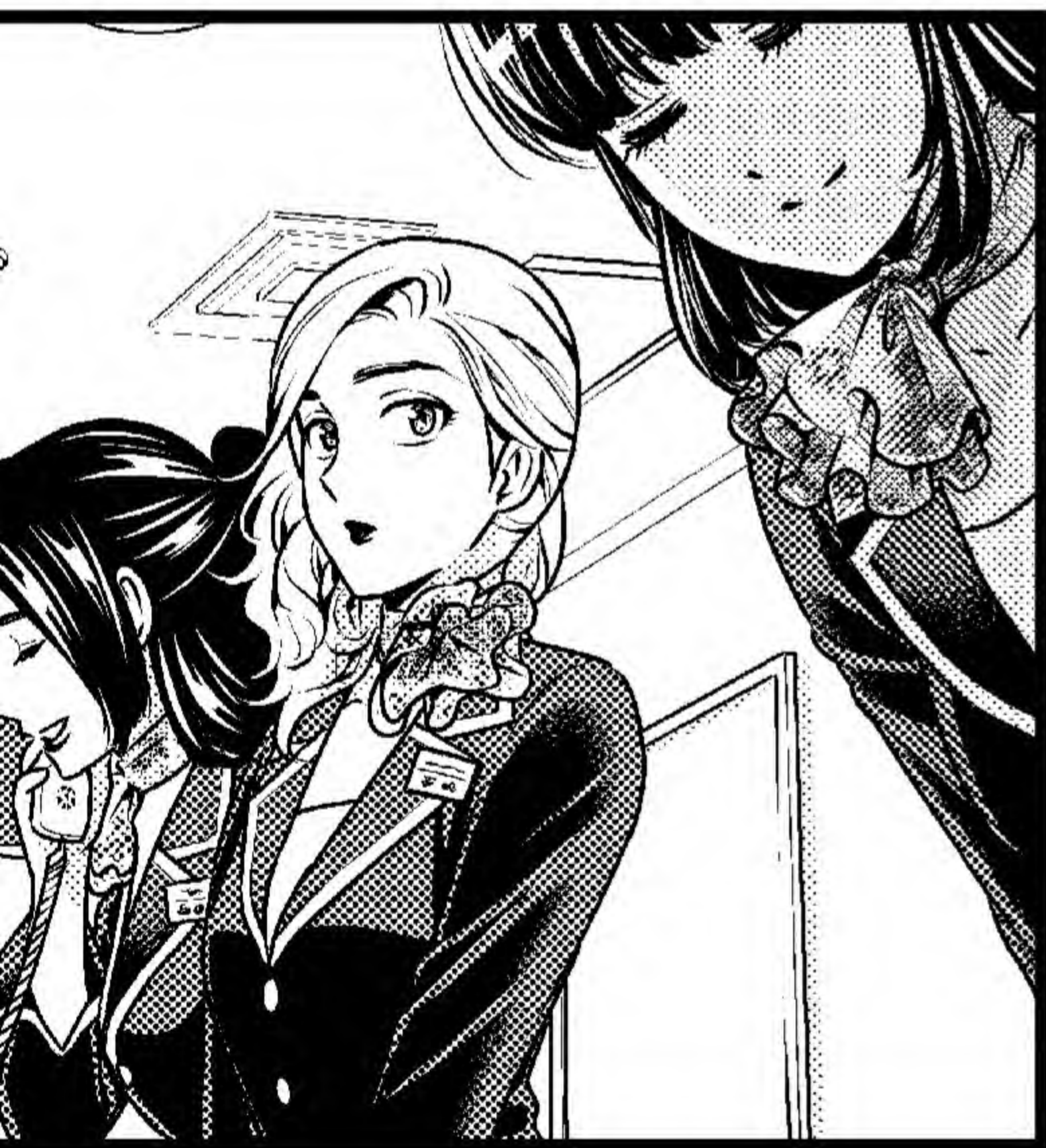
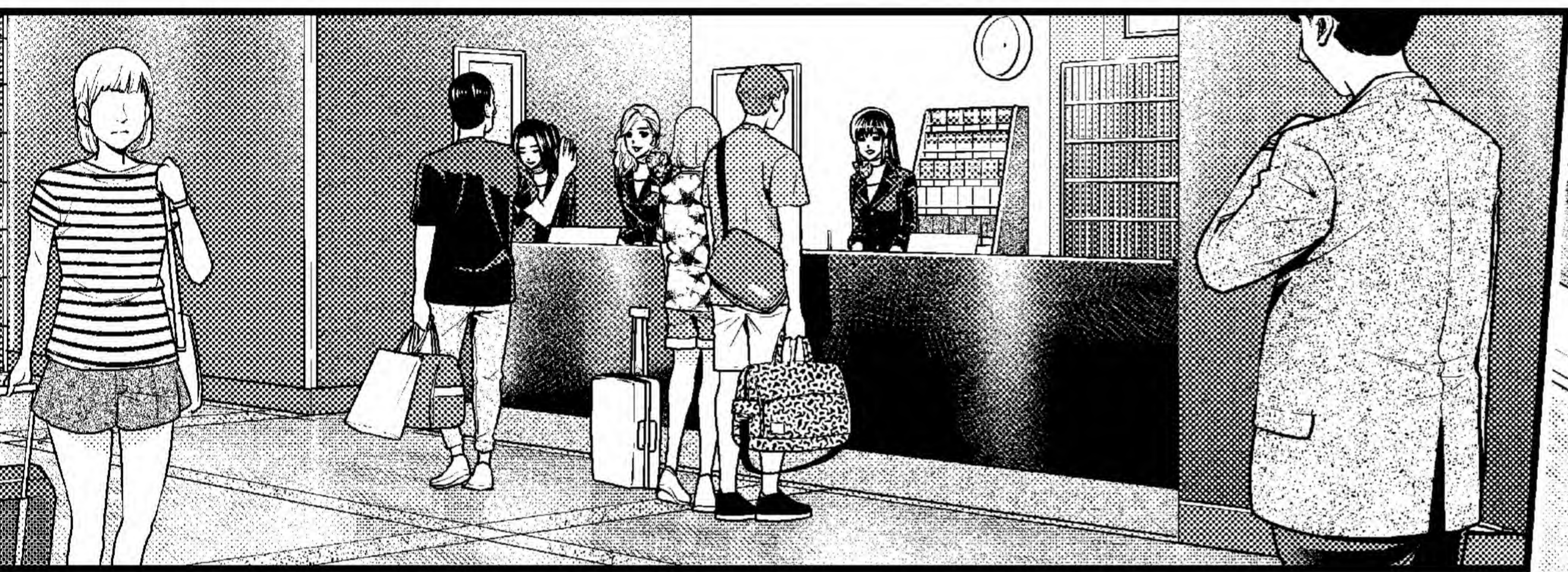
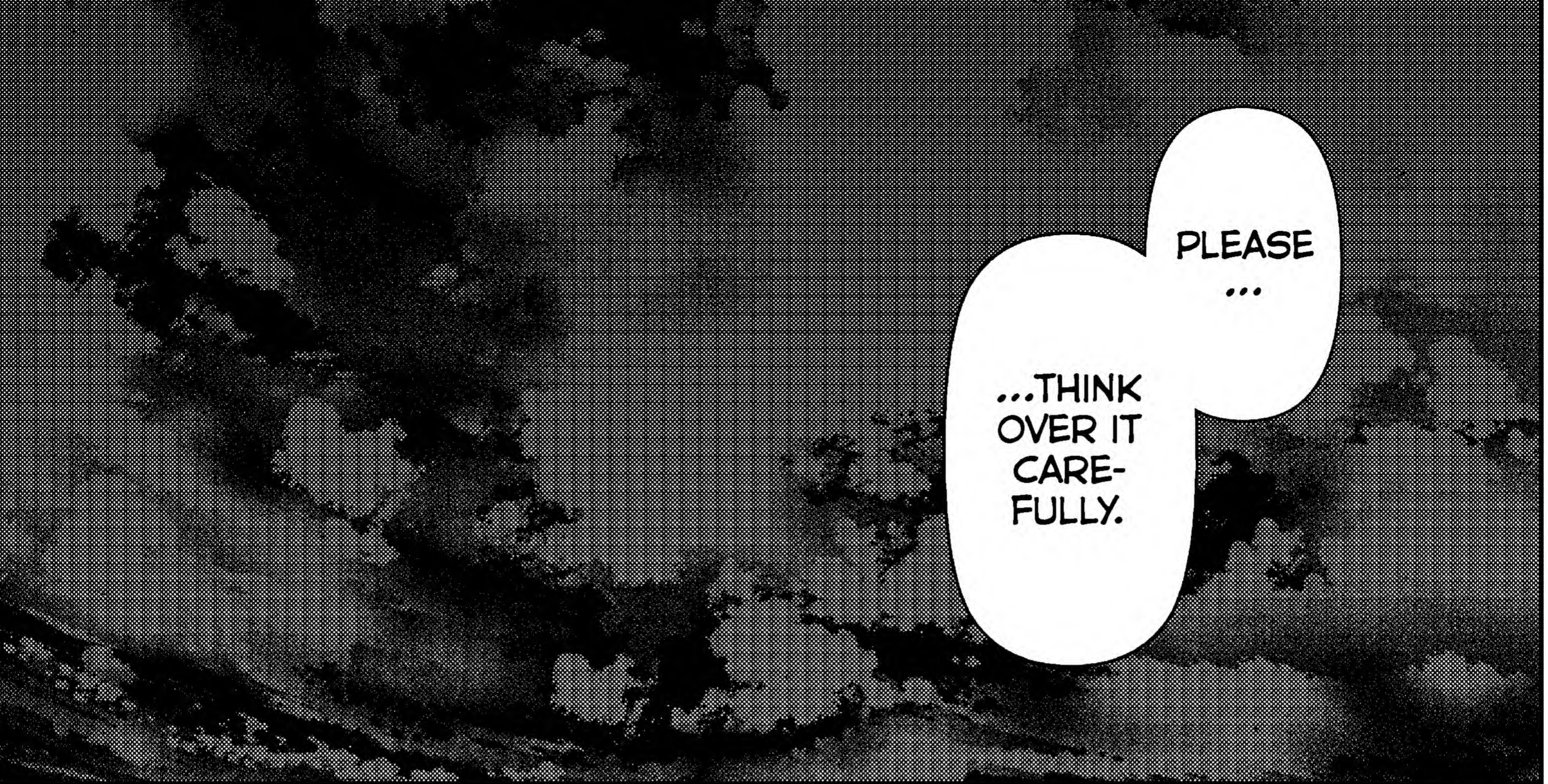


I'VE TOLD  
YOU HOW  
I FEEL.

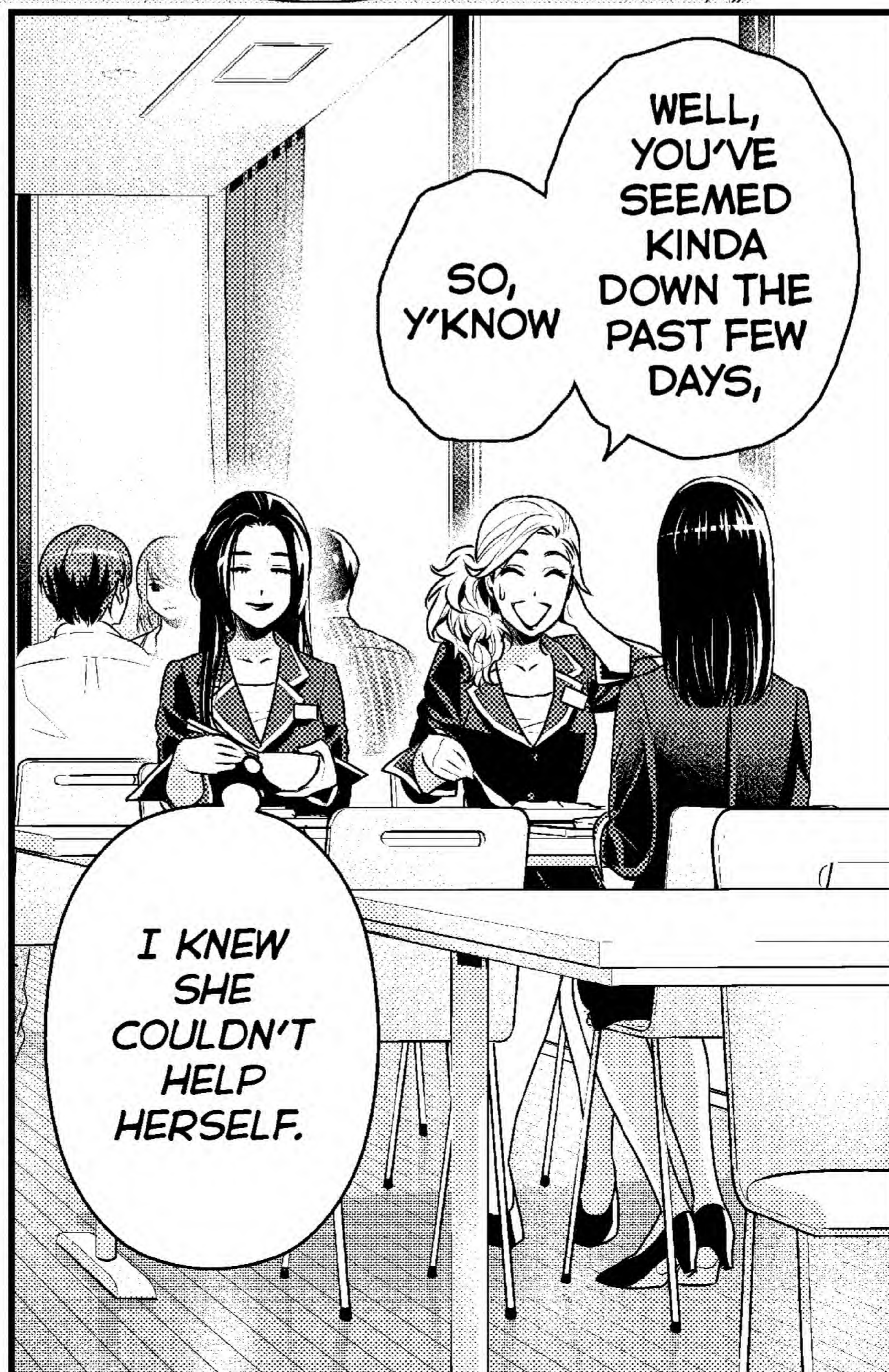
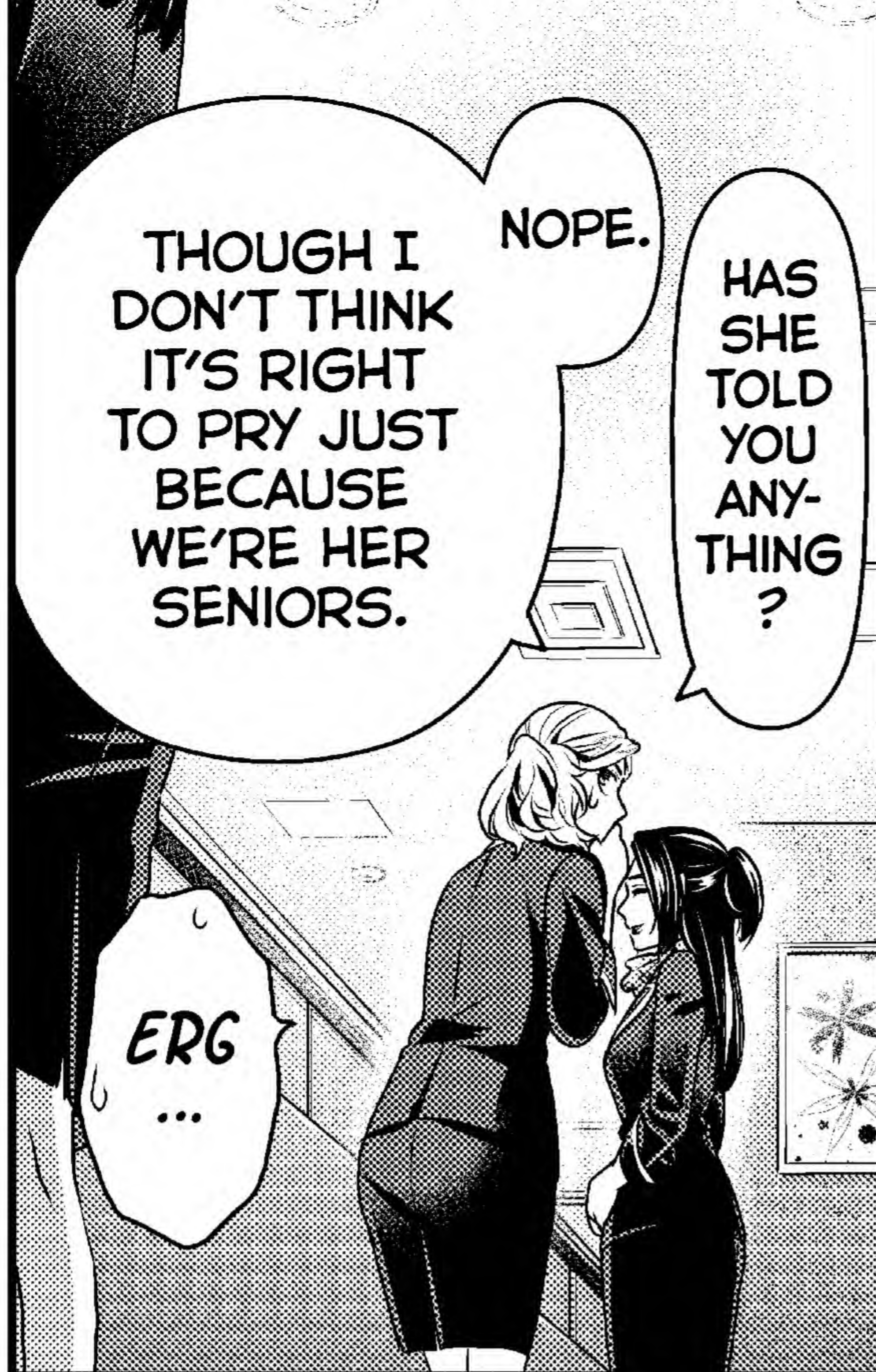
AT  
ANY  
RATE,

I SUPPOSE  
I TOOK  
YOUR COM-  
ING HERE  
TONIGHT  
AS A KIND  
OF GREEN  
LIGHT.













WITH MARRIAGE AS A STRONG POSSIBILITY.

I WAS OFFICIALLY ASKED OUT THE OTHER DAY.



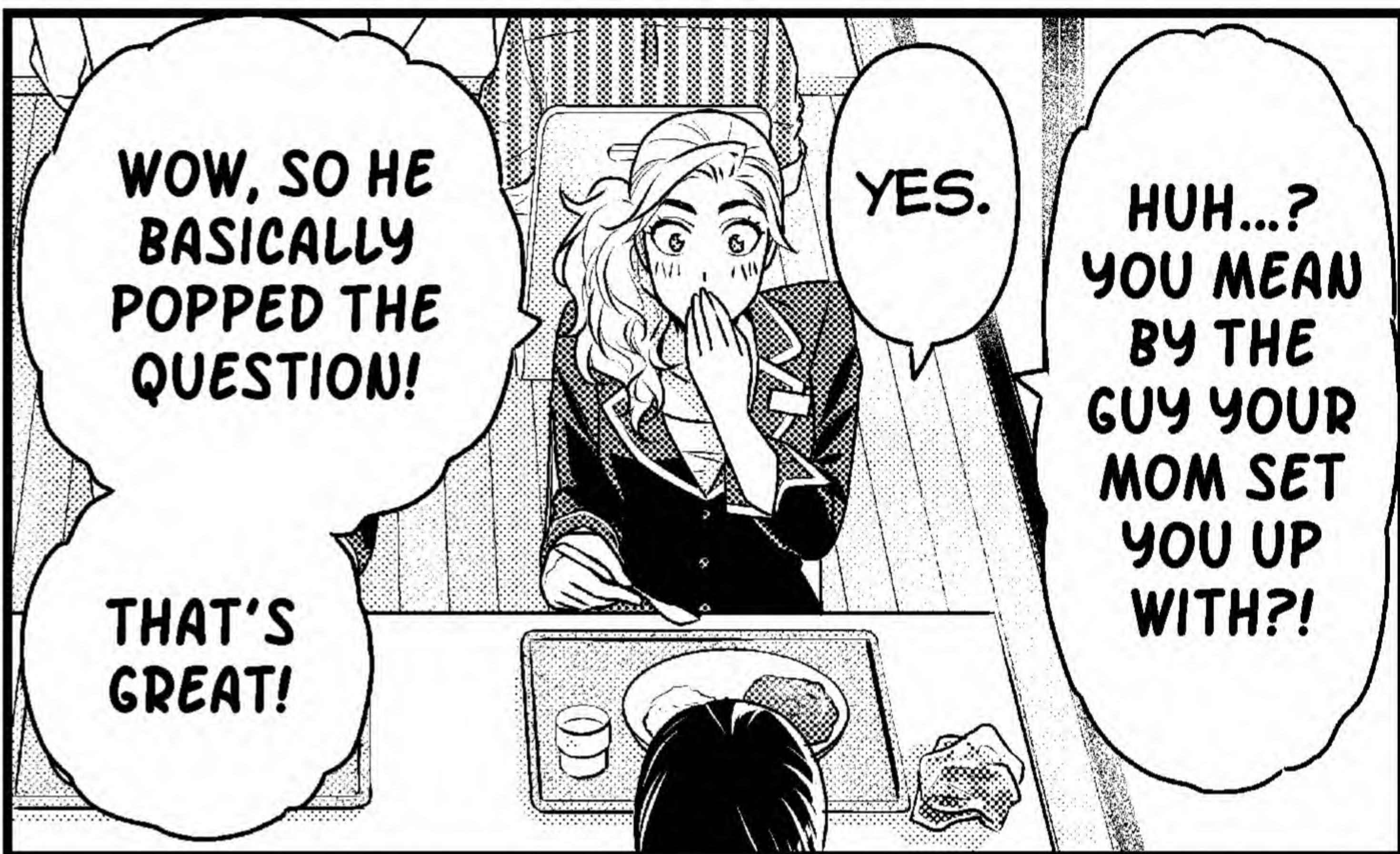
THEN FEEL FREE TO TALK TO US. MAYBE WE CAN HELP.

IF SOMETHING'S BOTHERING YOU,



WHY? NOT SO HOT ON THE IDEA?

OH...  
BUT THAT'S WHAT'S GOT YOU DOWN, HUH?



WOW, SO HE BASICALLY POPPED THE QUESTION!

THAT'S GREAT!

YES.

HUH...? YOU MEAN BY THE GUY YOUR MOM SET YOU UP WITH?!



I JUST CAN'T FIND THE COURAGE TO COMMIT YET.

THEN AGAIN, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANYONE ELSE IN MY LIFE.

WELL, IT'S A HUGE COMMITMENT TO MAKE.



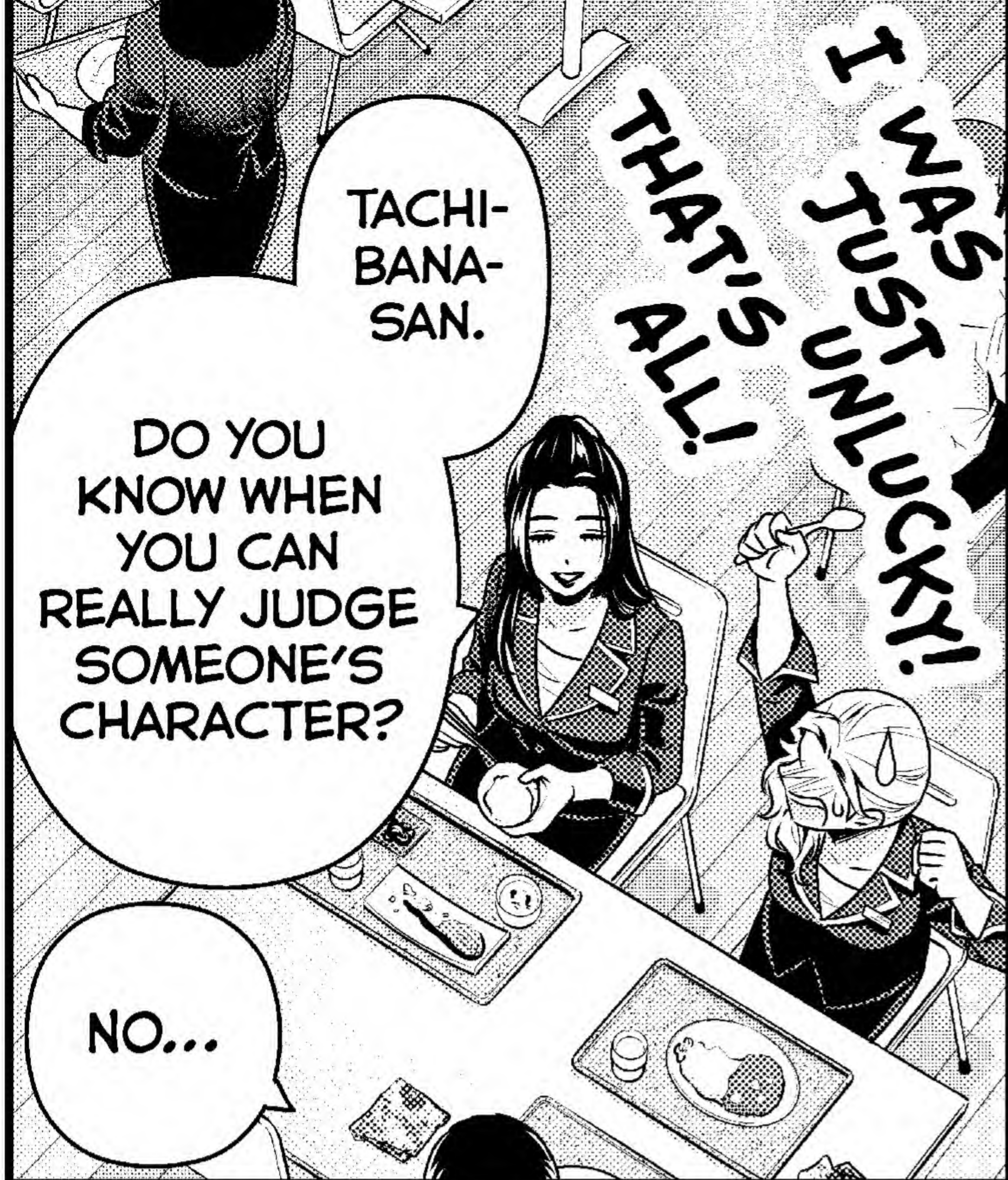
DON'T GET ME WRONG, HE'S A NICE PERSON.

BUT TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT SURE IF I WANT TO BE WITH HIM FOREVER.

...YOU COULD SAY THAT. I'M STILL NOT QUITE READY TO TAKE THAT STEP.

I GUESS ...



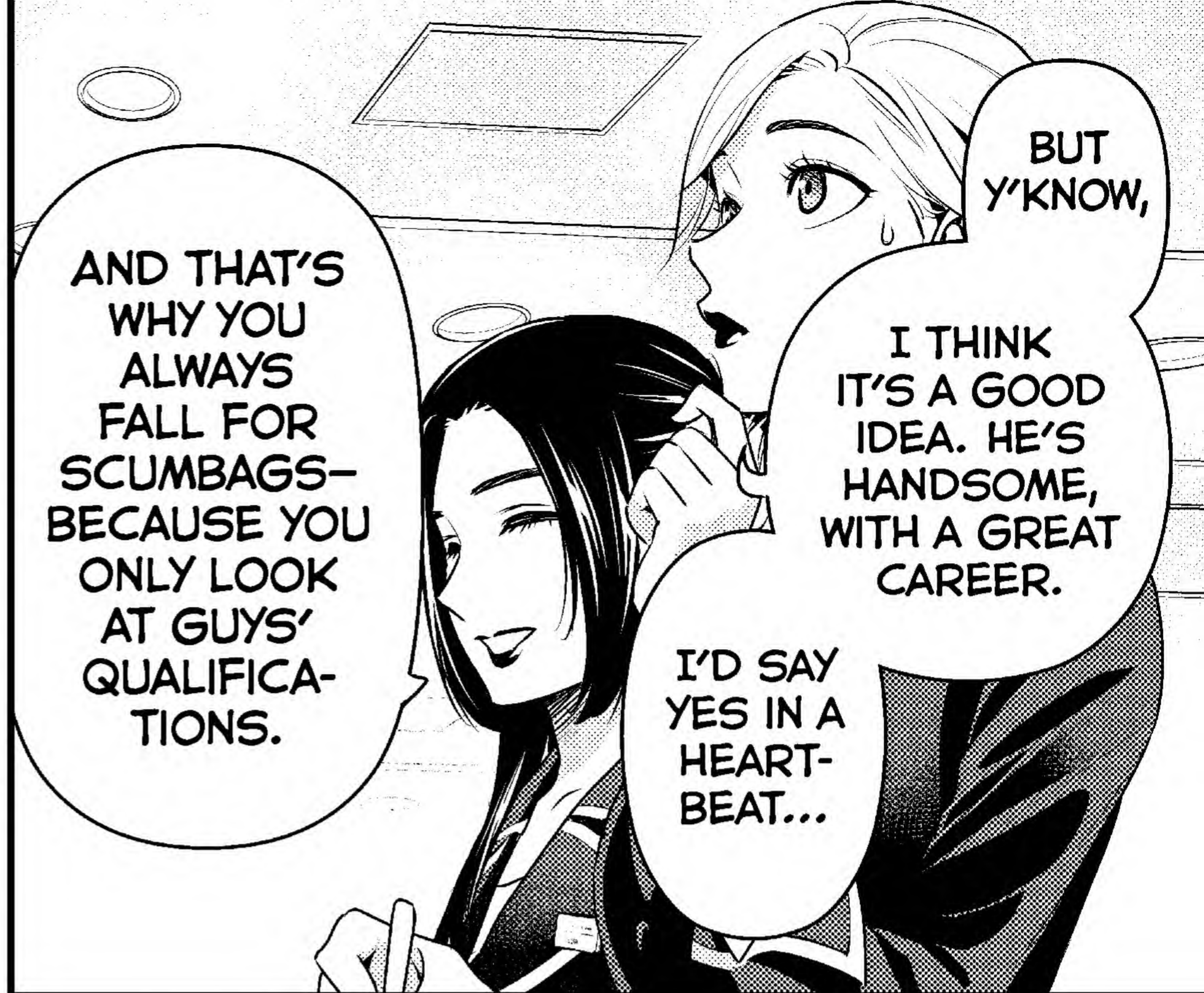


TACHI-  
BANA-  
SAN.

DO YOU  
KNOW WHEN  
YOU CAN  
REALLY JUDGE  
SOMEONE'S  
CHARACTER?

NO...

I WAS UNLUCKY!  
THAT'S ALL!



AND THAT'S  
WHY YOU  
ALWAYS  
FALL FOR  
SCUMBAGS—  
BECAUSE YOU  
ONLY LOOK  
AT GUYS'  
QUALIFICA-  
TIONS.

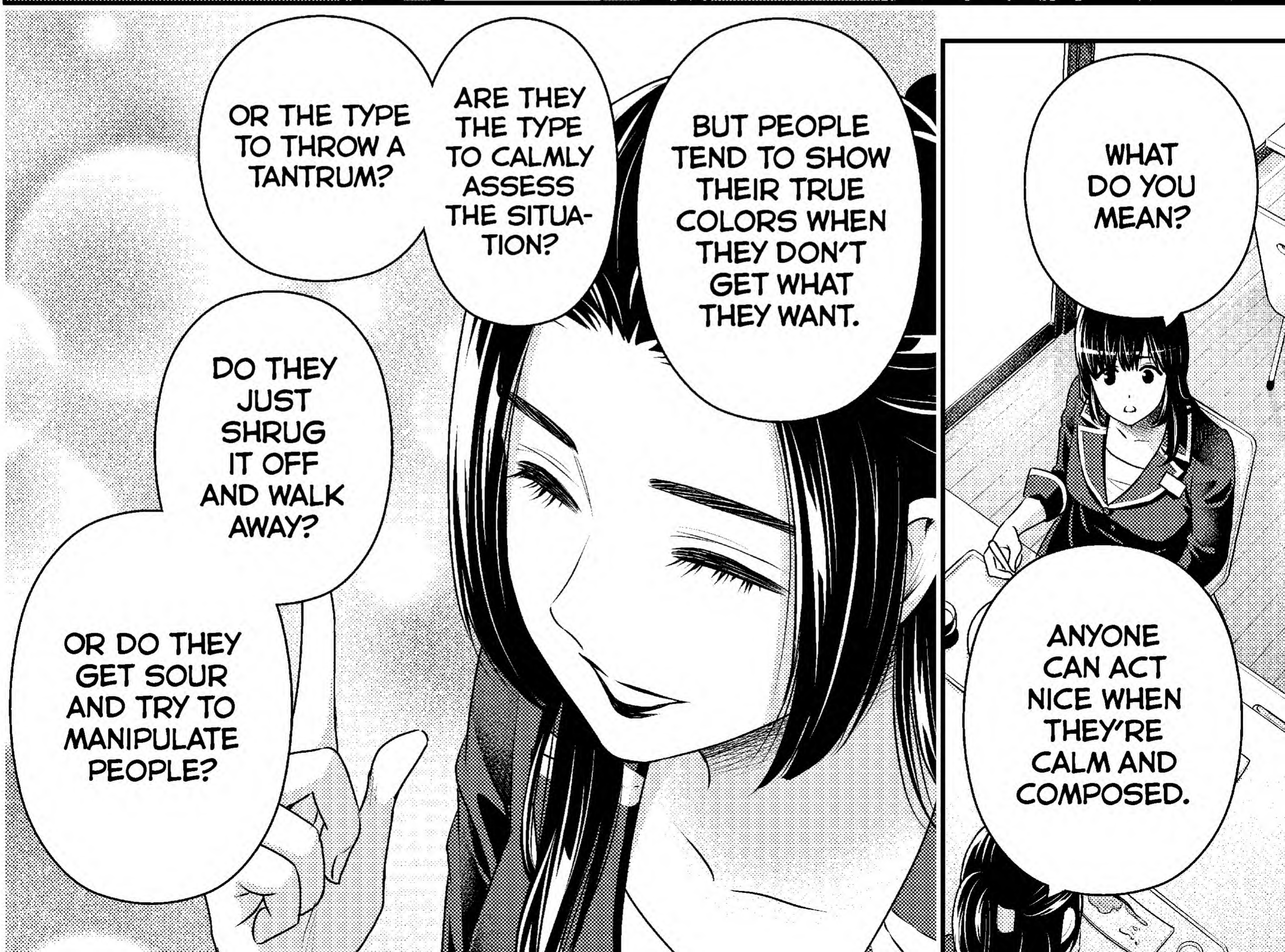
I'D SAY  
YES IN A  
HEART-  
BEAT...

I THINK  
IT'S A GOOD  
IDEA. HE'S  
HANDSOME,  
WITH A GREAT  
CAREER.

BUT  
Y'KNOW,



WHEN  
THINGS  
DON'T  
GO THEIR  
WAY.



OR THE TYPE  
TO THROW A  
TANTRUM?

ARE THEY  
THE TYPE  
TO CALMLY  
ASSESS  
THE SITUA-  
TION?

BUT PEOPLE  
TEND TO SHOW  
THEIR TRUE  
COLORS WHEN  
THEY DON'T  
GET WHAT  
THEY WANT.

DO THEY  
JUST  
SHRUG  
IT OFF  
AND WALK  
AWAY?

OR DO THEY  
GET SOUR  
AND TRY TO  
MANIPULATE  
PEOPLE?

WHAT  
DO YOU  
MEAN?

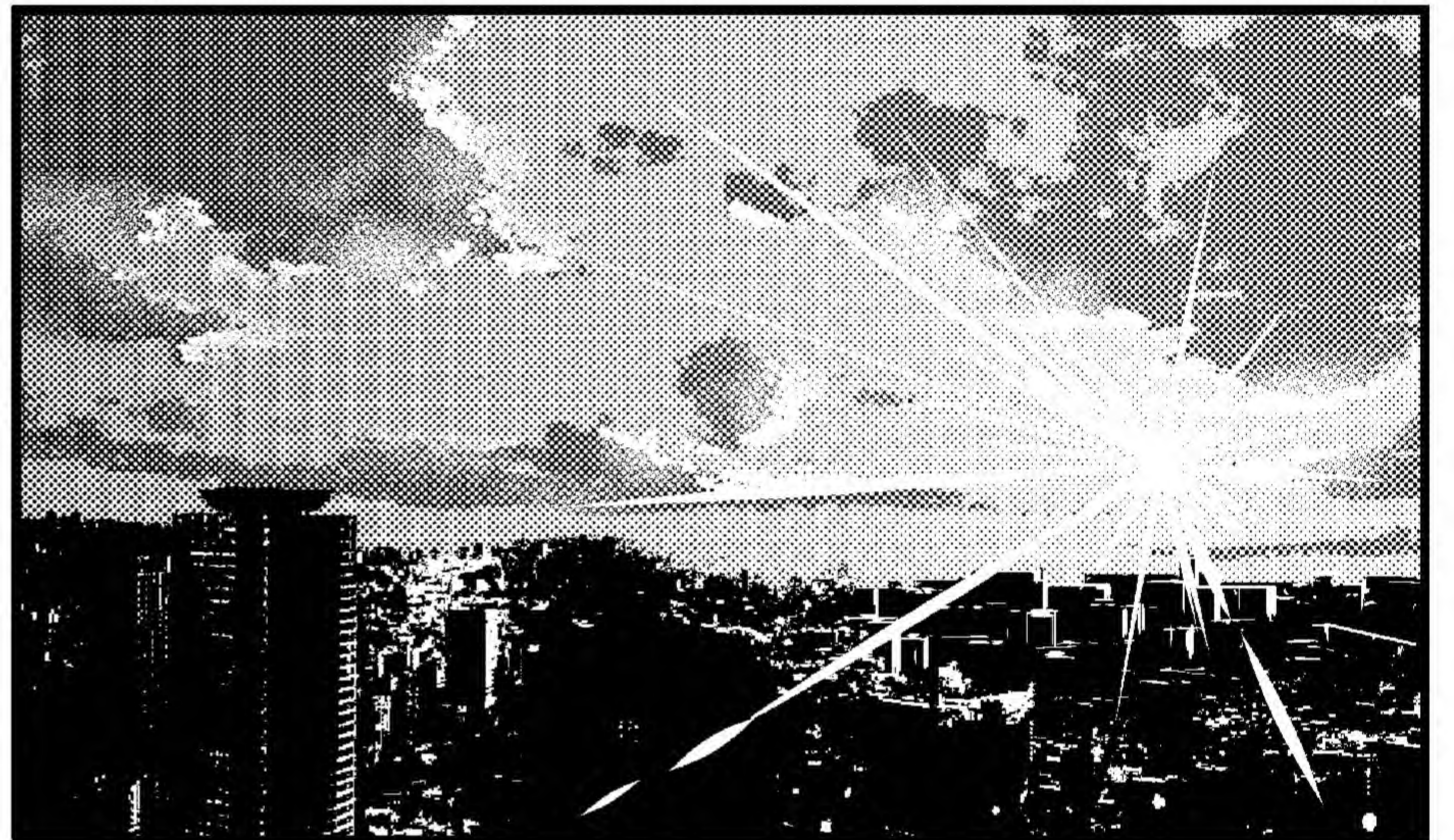
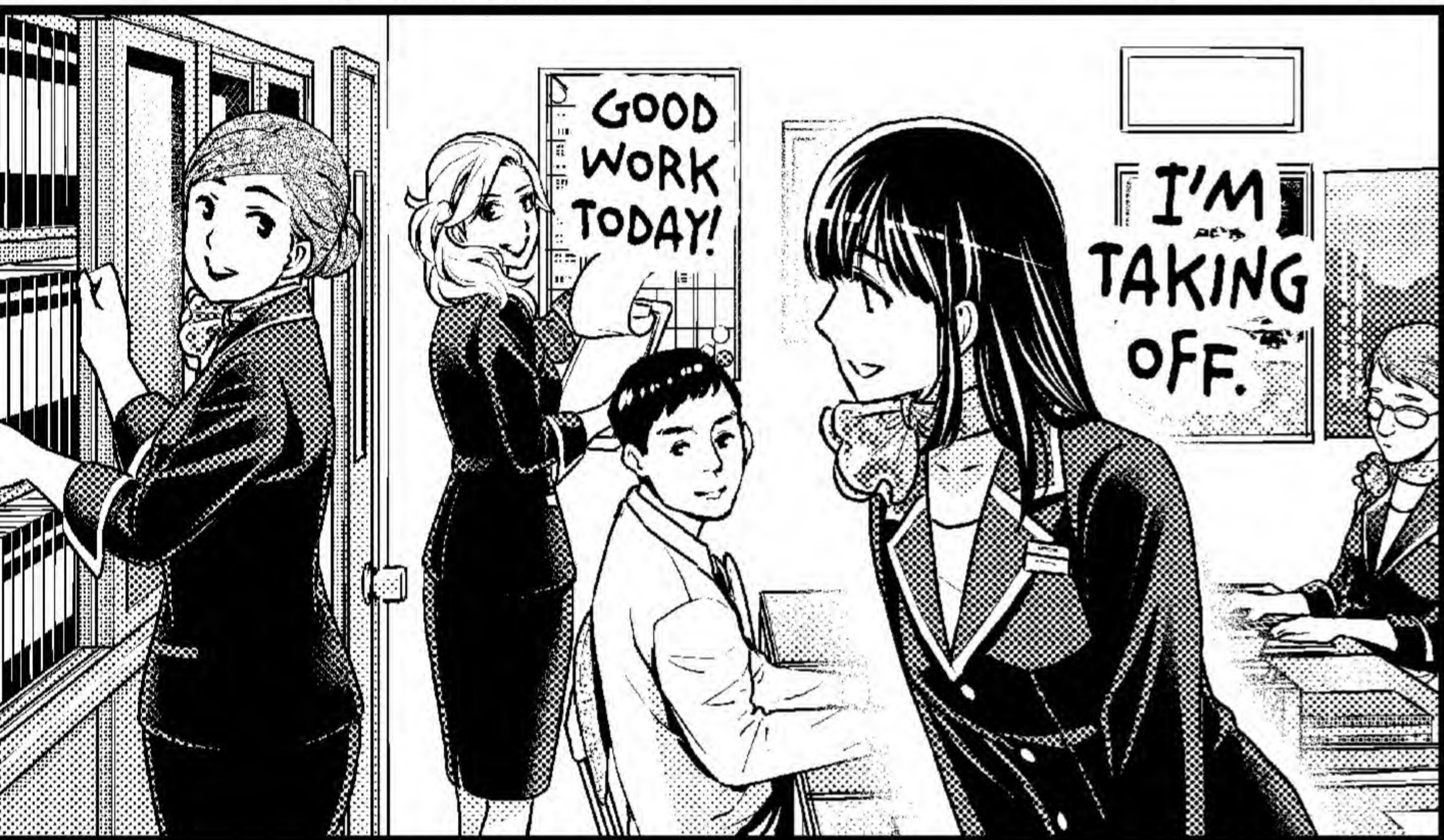
ANYONE  
CAN ACT  
NICE WHEN  
THEY'RE  
CALM AND  
COMPOSED.





IT'LL  
GIVE YOU  
AN IDEA  
OF WHAT  
TO EXPECT  
IN THE  
FUTURE.

YOU SHOULD  
TAKE A GOOD  
LOOK AT HOW  
HE ACTS  
DURING THE  
TIME LEADING  
UP TO YOUR  
DECISION.

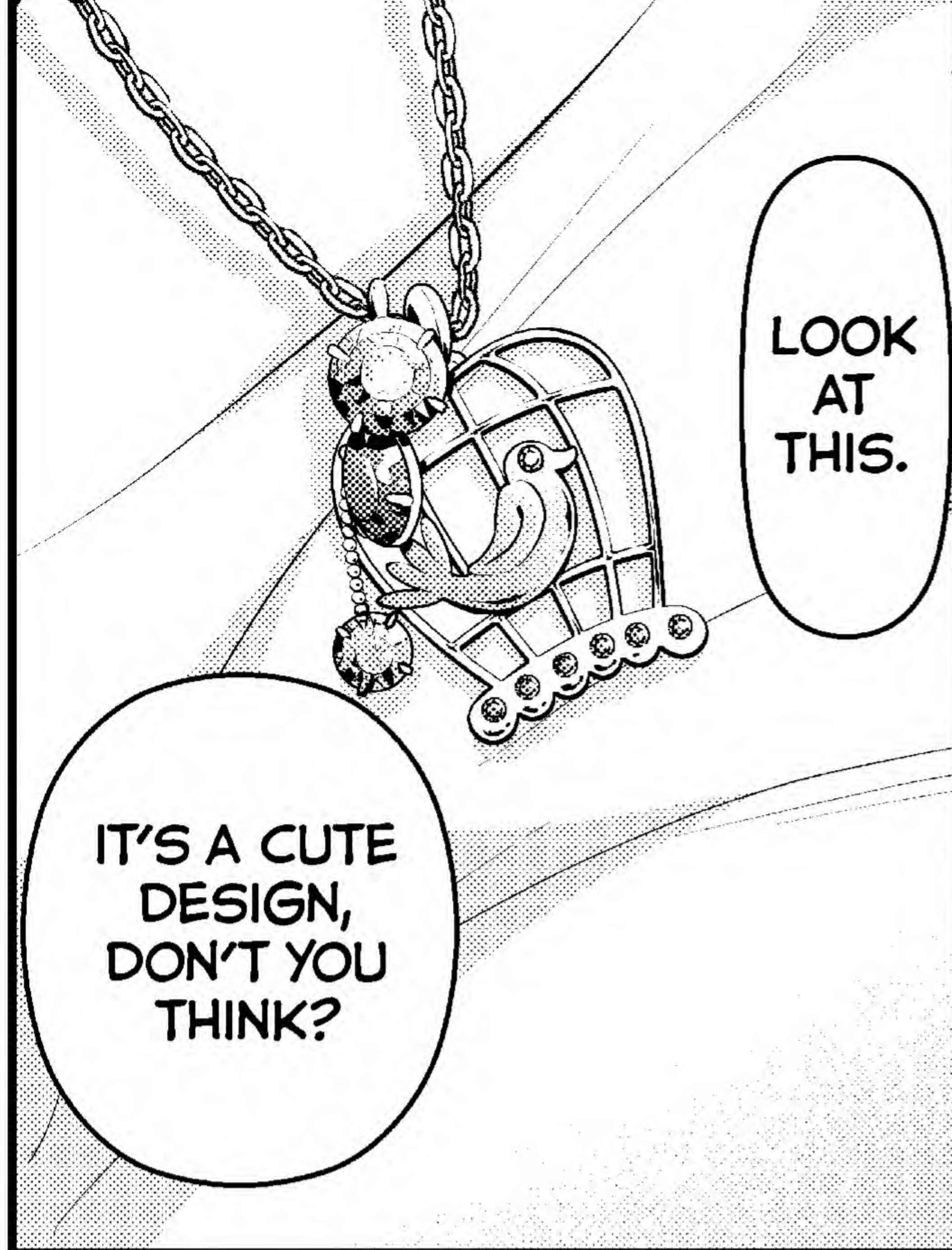


HINA-  
SAN!

HEY,  
THERE!







LOOK  
AT  
THIS.

IT'S A CUTE  
DESIGN,  
DON'T YOU  
THINK?



DON'T  
SAY THAT.

NO NEED  
TO BE  
MODEST.  
PLEASE,  
TAKE IT.

OH, NO...  
I CAN'T  
ACCEPT  
THIS...



WHY  
DON'T  
YOU TRY  
IT ON?

I SNAGGED  
IT UP  
BECAUSE  
I THOUGHT  
IT'D LOOK  
PERFECT  
ON YOU.



I'VE...

...BEEN  
PUTTING  
A LOT OF  
THOUGHT  
INTO IT  
SINCE  
THEN...



I TAKE IT  
YOU'RE  
FINALLY  
READY...

...TO  
GIVE ME  
YOUR  
ANSWER  
?



...

SO...





SO,  
UM,

I'M NOT  
READY TO  
COMMIT TO  
MARRIAGE.

NOT  
YET  
...

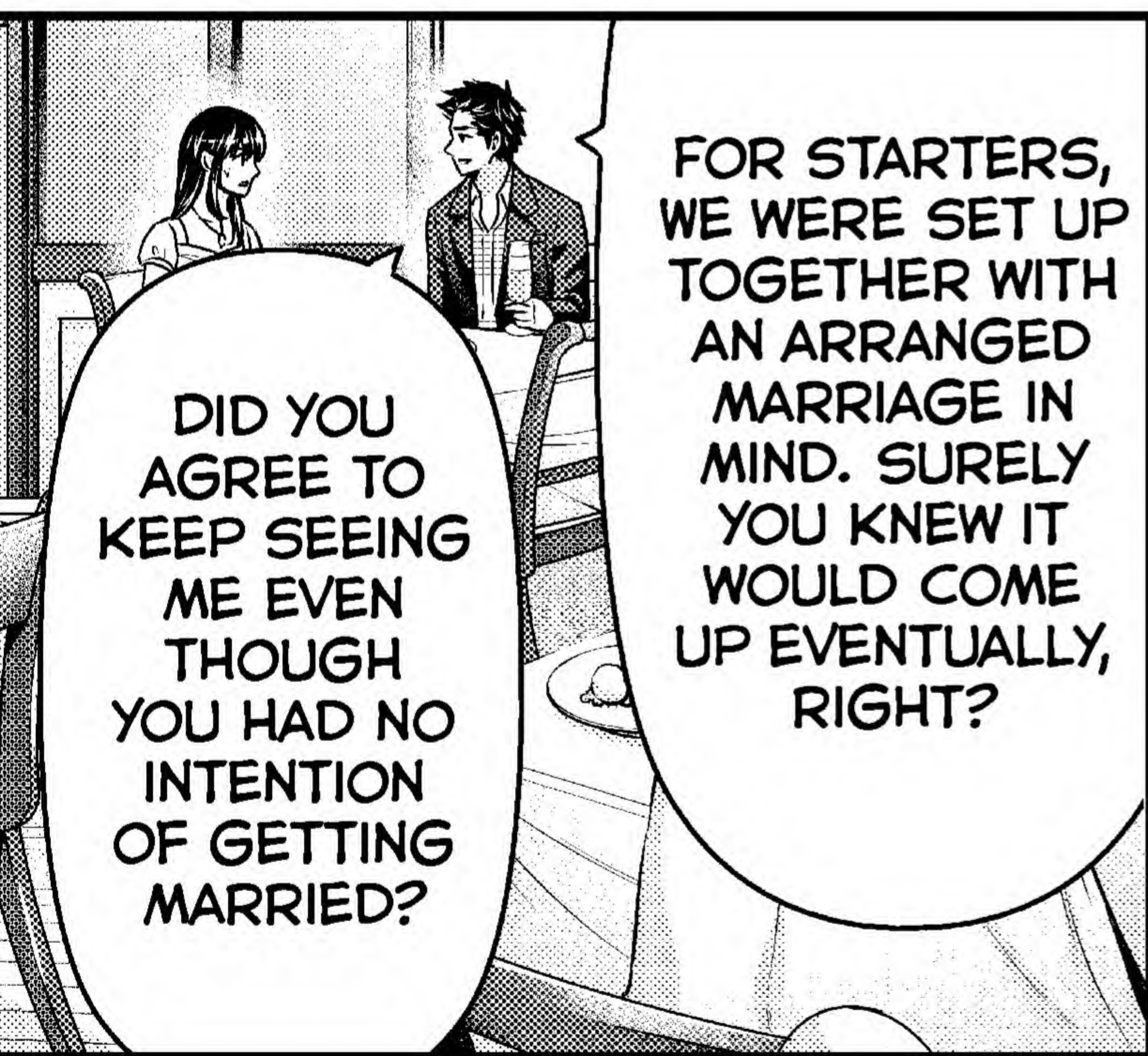
BUT...

...WE  
HAVEN'T  
KNOWN  
EACH OTHER  
FOR VERY  
LONG YET.



IF YOU HAD  
BEEN, THEN  
YOU WOULDN'T  
HAVE COME  
TO A VAGUE  
CONCLUSION  
LIKE  
"NOT YET."

HUH  
...?



DID YOU  
AGREE TO  
KEEP SEEING  
ME EVEN  
THOUGH  
YOU HAD NO  
INTENTION  
OF GETTING  
MARRIED?

FOR STARTERS,  
WE WERE SET UP  
TOGETHER WITH  
AN ARRANGED  
MARRIAGE IN  
MIND. SURELY  
YOU KNEW IT  
WOULD COME  
UP EVENTUALLY,  
RIGHT?



NO  
...!

AM I  
JUST A  
TICKET  
TO A  
FREE  
MEAL TO  
YOU?



IN OTHER  
WORDS, YOU  
HAVEN'T BEEN  
THINKING  
ABOUT AT ALL,  
HAVE YOU?



AND FROM  
WHAT I HEAR,  
SHE MAKES  
MORE THAN  
HER NEW  
HUSBAND.

DON'T YOU THINK  
YOUR MOTHER  
WANTS YOU TO  
FIND A STABLE  
PARTNER, TOO?  
SHE SEEMED  
TO LIKE ME  
THE LAST TIME  
WE MET.

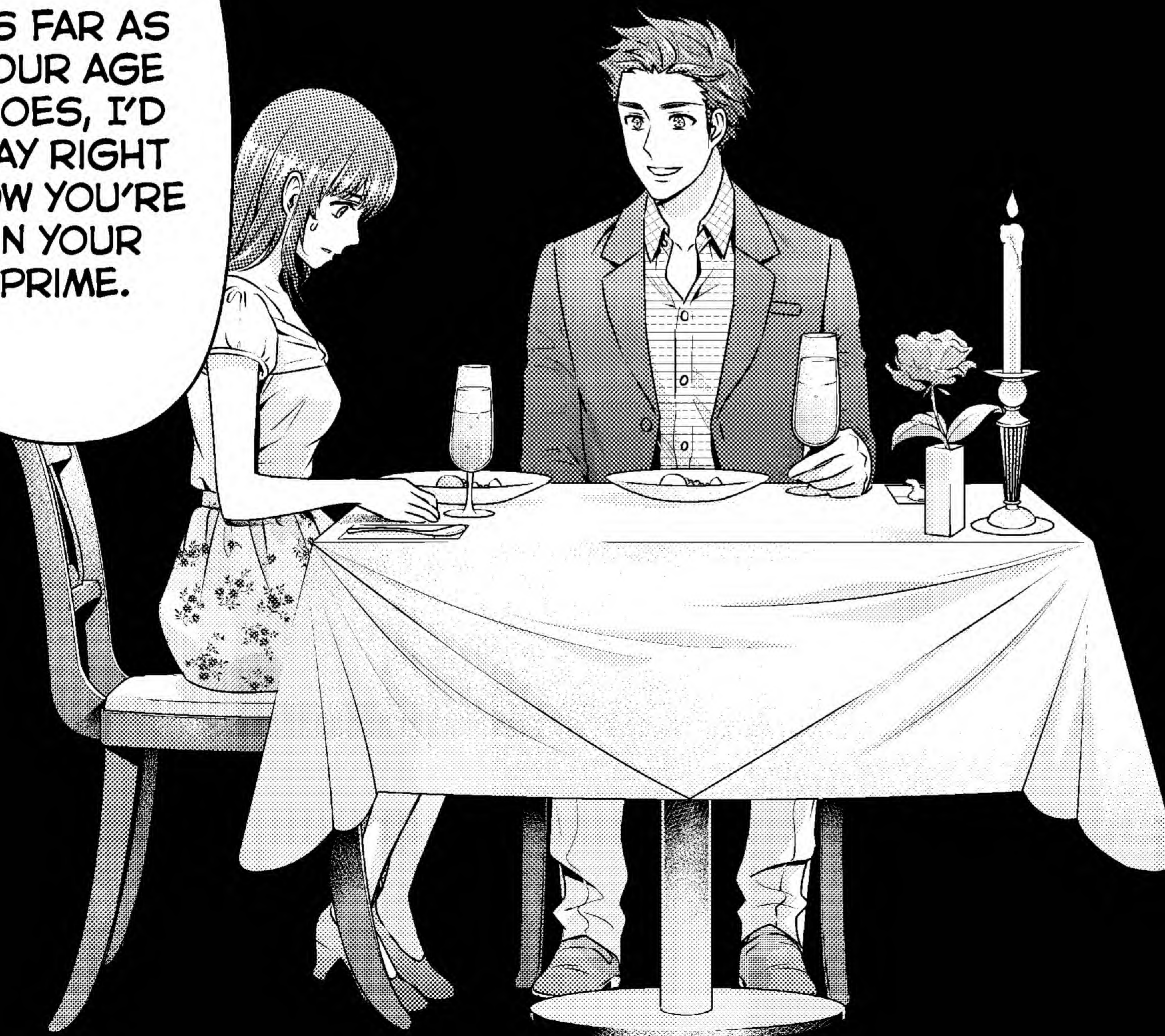
I CAN  
SUPPORT  
YOU SO THAT  
YOU'LL NEVER  
HAVE TO  
WORK AGAIN.  
YOU CAN BE A  
HOUSEWIFE,  
YOU KNOW.

SHE MUST  
BE WORRIED.  
A MAN  
SHOULD BE  
THE BREAD-  
WINNER.

AS FAR AS  
YOUR AGE  
GOES, I'D  
SAY RIGHT  
NOW YOU'RE  
IN YOUR  
PRIME.

THAT SAID,  
I DOUBT  
YOU'LL FIND  
ANYONE  
BETTER  
QUALIFIED  
THAN ME.

IF YOU WANT  
TO HAVE  
CHILDREN  
SOMEDAY,  
THEN THE  
ANSWER  
SHOULD BE  
SIMPLE.



THAT'S  
...

WEREN'T YOU  
FULLY AWARE  
OF THAT WHEN  
YOU TOOK ME  
UP ON MY  
OFFERS?

WHY WOULD  
I KEEP  
TREATING  
YOU TO DINNER  
IF I DIDN'T  
EXPECT  
SOMETHING  
TO COME  
OF IT?

IF THAT  
WASN'T A  
SIGN OF  
CONSENT,  
THEN WHAT  
WAS IT?

AND EVEN  
THOUGH YOU  
PRETENDED TO  
BE MODEST,  
YOU DID STILL  
ACCEPT  
MY GIFTS.

YOU'RE 26  
THIS YEAR,  
AREN'T YOU?  
DO YOU PLAN  
ON WORK-  
ING AT THAT  
HOTEL FOR  
THE REST OF  
YOUR LIFE?

BESIDES,  
THINKING  
ABOUT IT  
FROM YOUR  
PERSPECTIVE,  
I CAN'T FIND  
ANY REASON  
FOR YOU TO  
HESITATE.





I WAS  
EXPECTING  
A GOOD  
ANSWER  
TODAY,

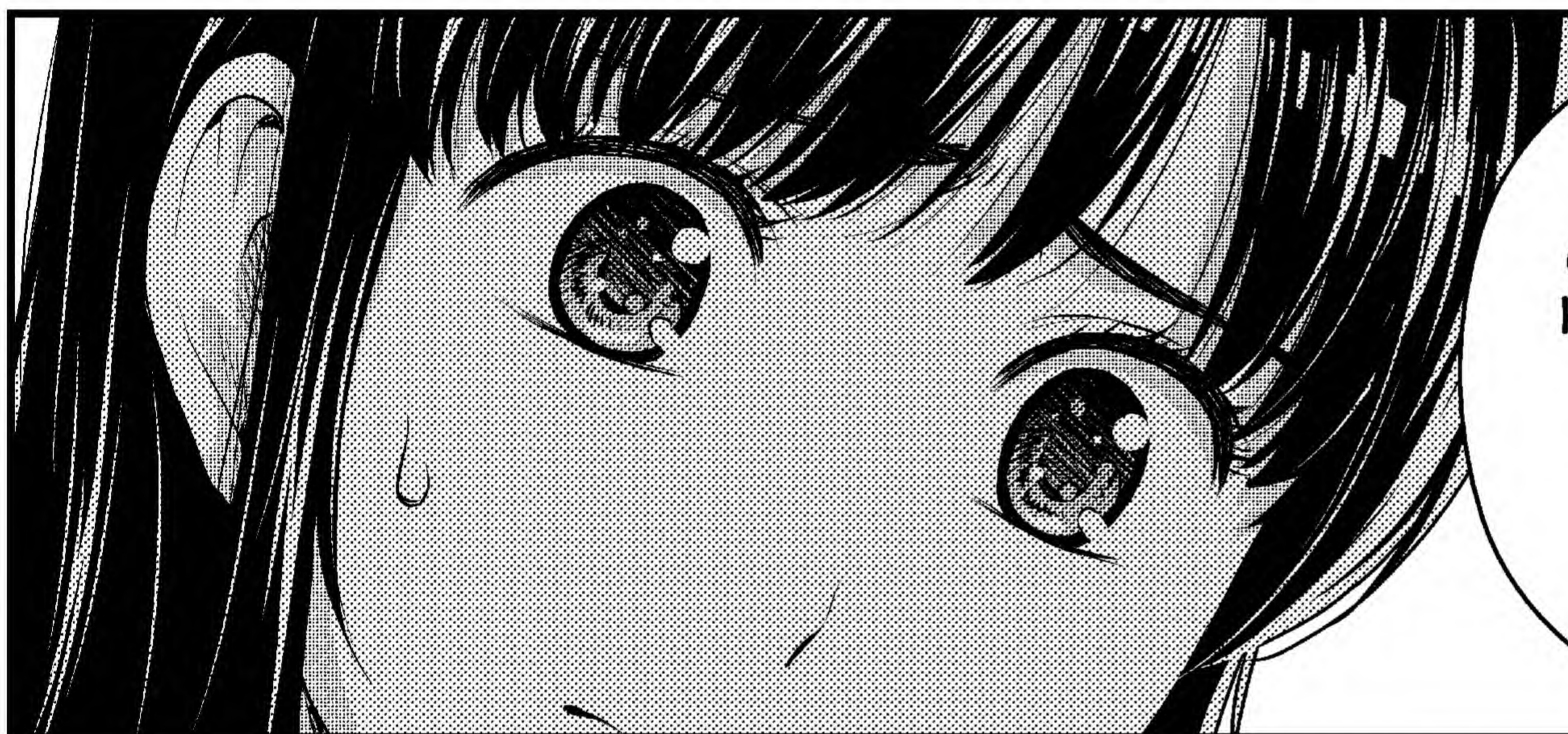
SO I  
GUESS  
I GOT A  
LITTLE  
WORKED  
UP.

SORRY  
ABOUT THAT.  
I KINDA  
RAMBLLED ON,  
DIDN'T I?



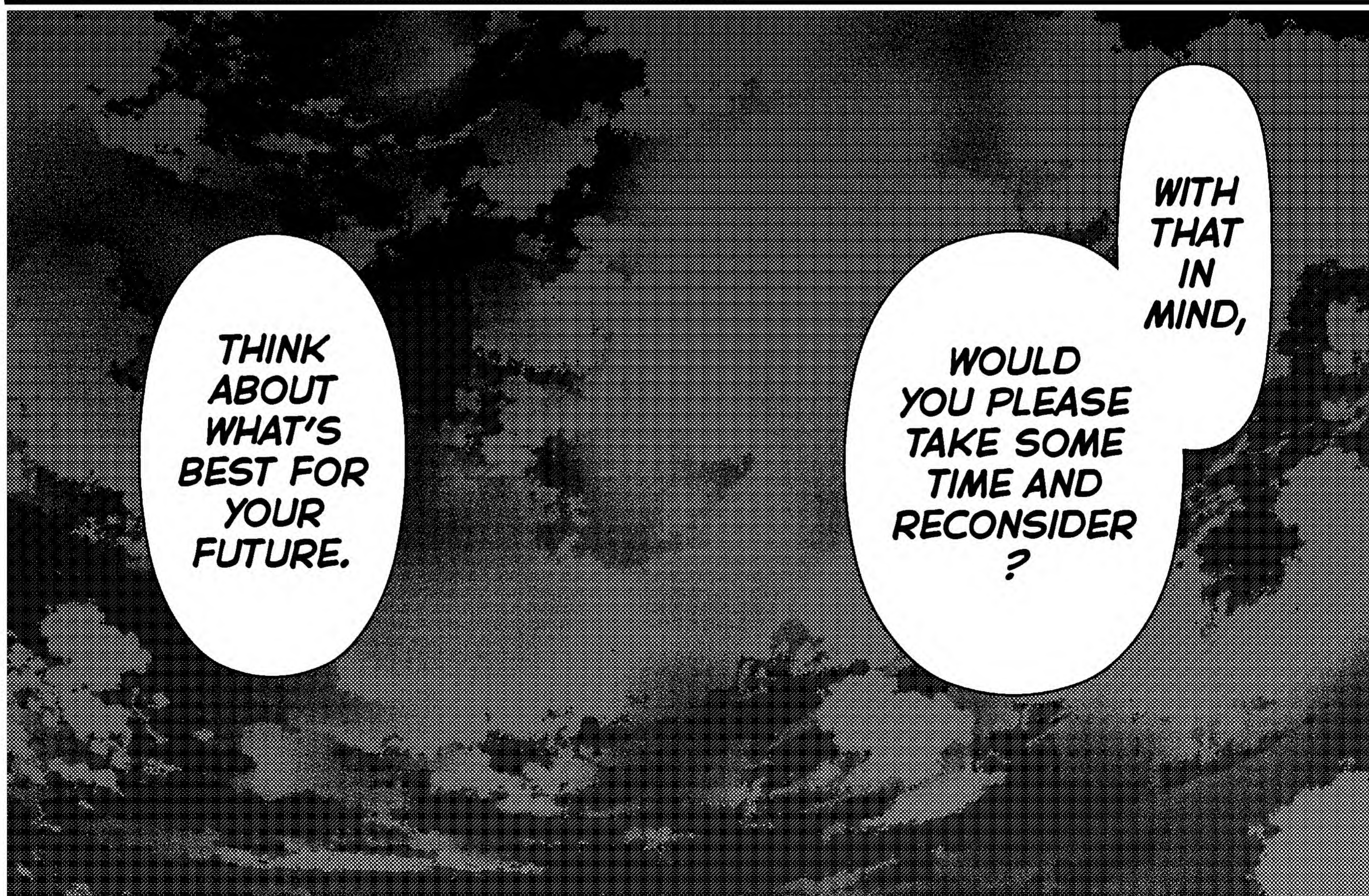
...

...  
OH!



THAT JUST  
GOES TO SHOW  
HOW CONFIDENT  
I AM THAT  
I CAN MAKE  
YOU HAPPY,  
HINA-SAN.

STILL  
...

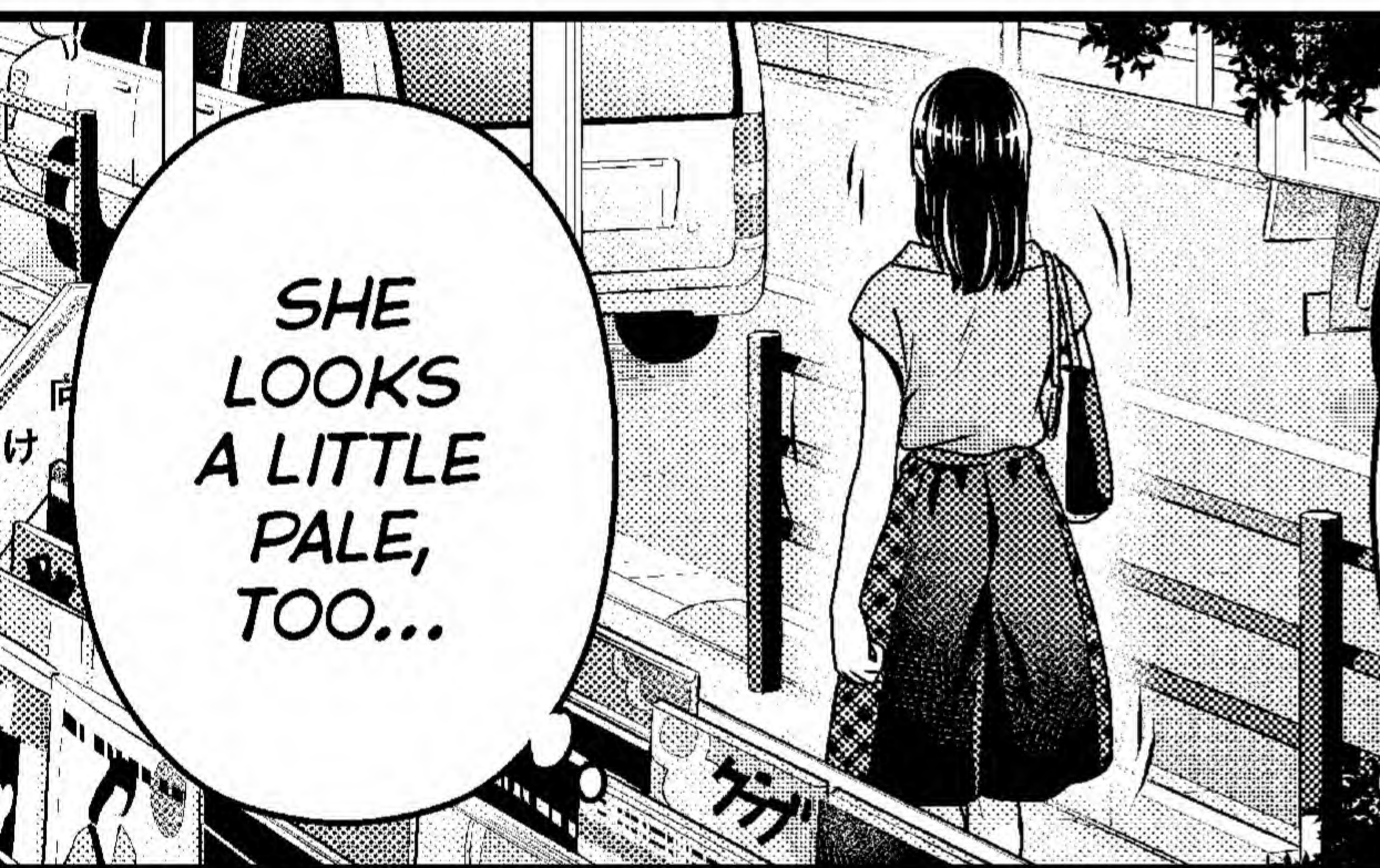
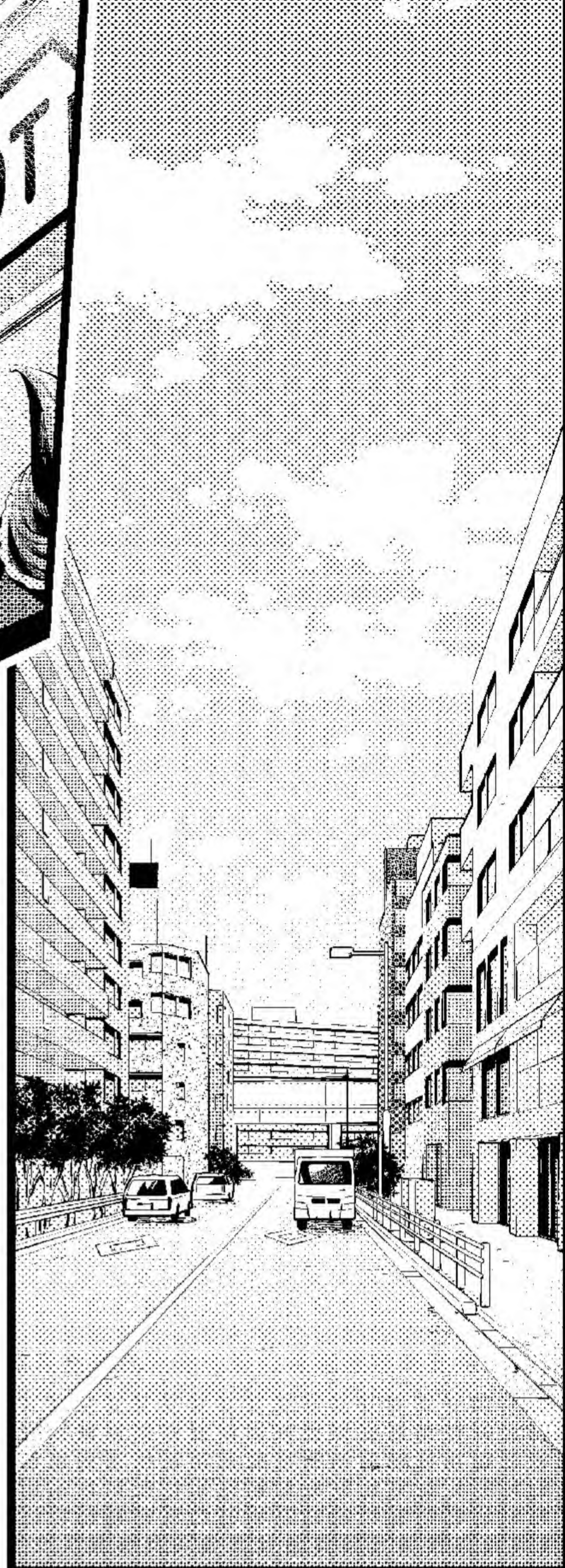


THINK  
ABOUT  
WHAT'S  
BEST FOR  
YOUR  
FUTURE.

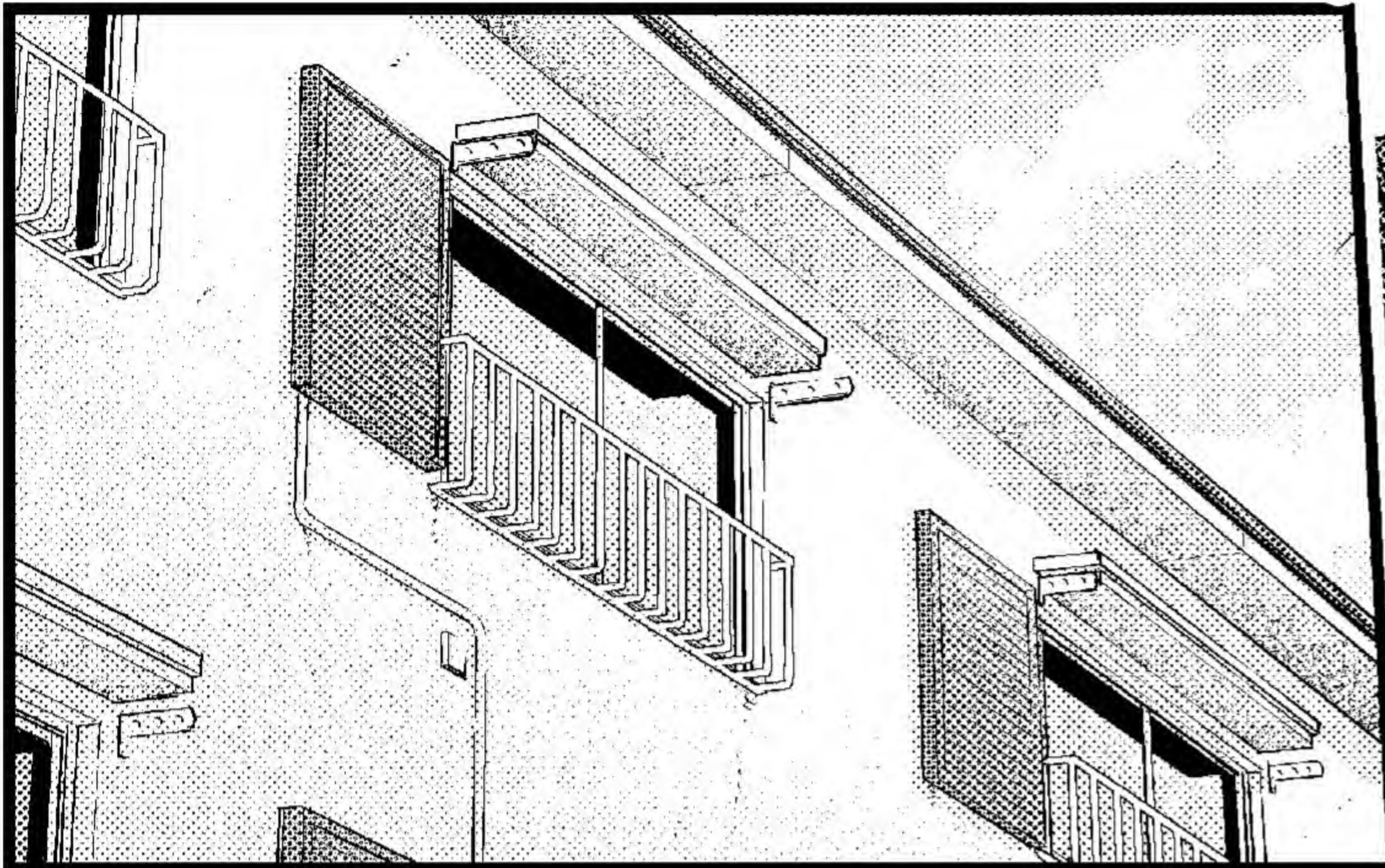
WOULD  
YOU PLEASE  
TAKE SOME  
TIME AND  
RECONSIDER  
?

WITH  
THAT  
IN  
MIND,







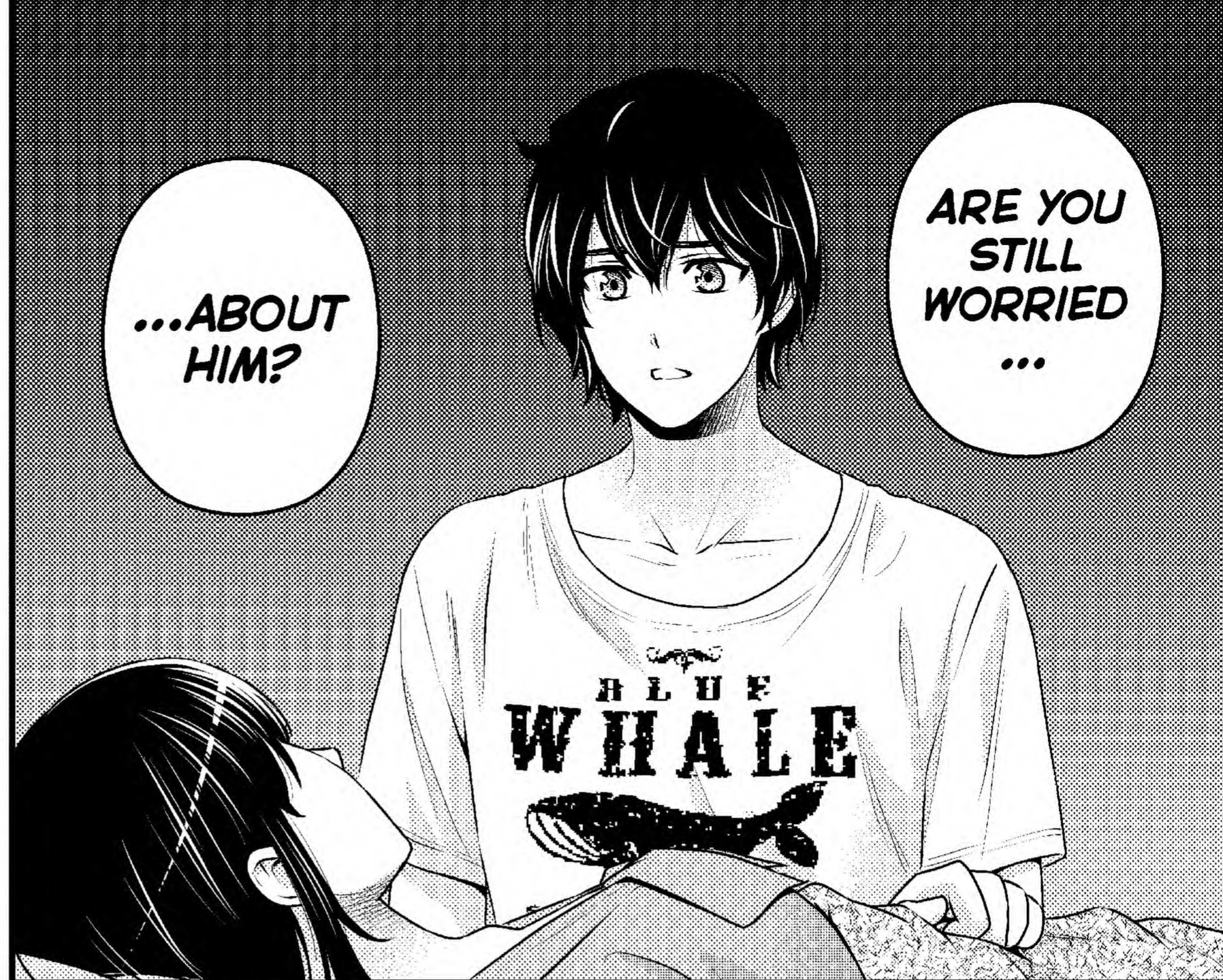






ENOUGH  
TO MAKE  
YOU LOSE  
SLEEP  
OVER IT?

...



...ABOUT  
HIM?

ARE YOU  
STILL  
WORRIED  
...



OR YOU  
DON'T  
WANT TO  
EMBARRASS  
TSUKIKO-  
SAN.

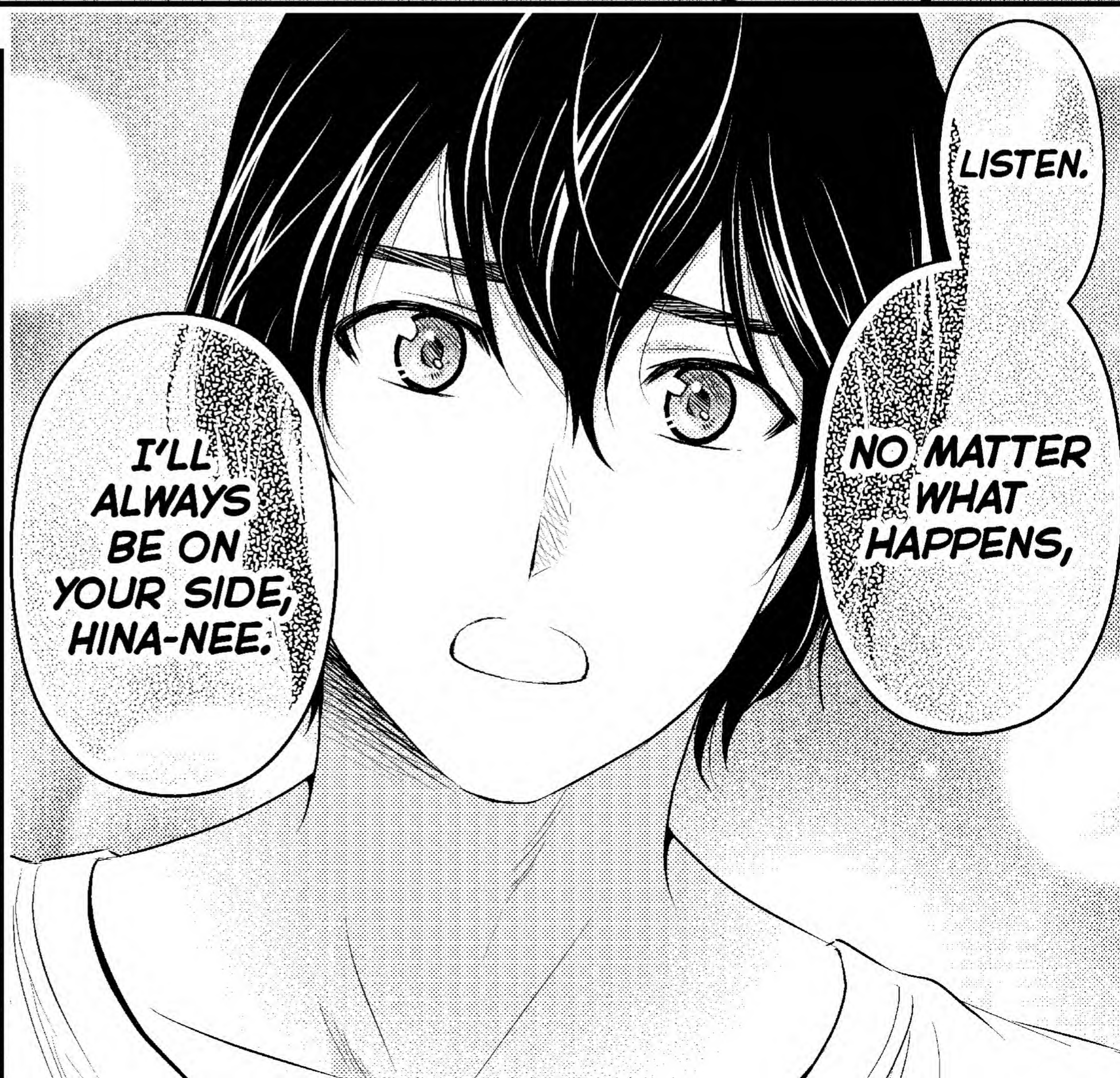
...BECAUSE  
YOU DON'T  
WANT TO  
WORRY  
ANYONE,

I BET  
YOU'RE  
BOTTLING  
EVERY-  
THING UP  
AGAIN...

KNOWING  
YOU,



I'M  
SURE THE  
LAST THING  
TSUKIKO-SAN  
WANTS IS  
FOR YOU TO  
SUFFER,  
TOO.

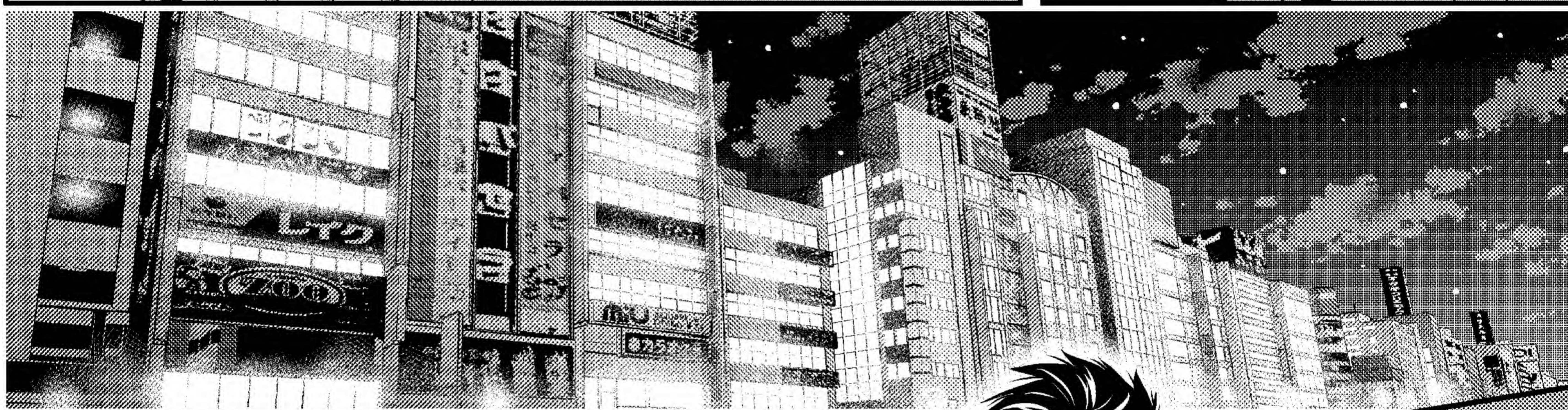


I'LL  
ALWAYS  
BE ON  
YOUR SIDE,  
HINA-NEE.

LISTEN.

NO MATTER  
WHAT  
HAPPENS,









ALL OF THE  
GIFTS YOU'VE  
GIVEN ME AND  
A CHECK FOR  
MY SHARE OF  
THE MEALS  
UNTIL NOW.

WHAT'S  
THIS?



FOR THE  
DINNERS,  
I LOOKED  
ONLINE FOR  
A GENERAL  
RANGE...

...AND  
INCLUDED  
A LITTLE  
EXTRA,  
JUST TO  
BE SAFE.

I REPLACED  
THE  
WHISKEY  
SINCE I  
OPENED  
THE BOTTLE  
YOU GAVE  
ME.



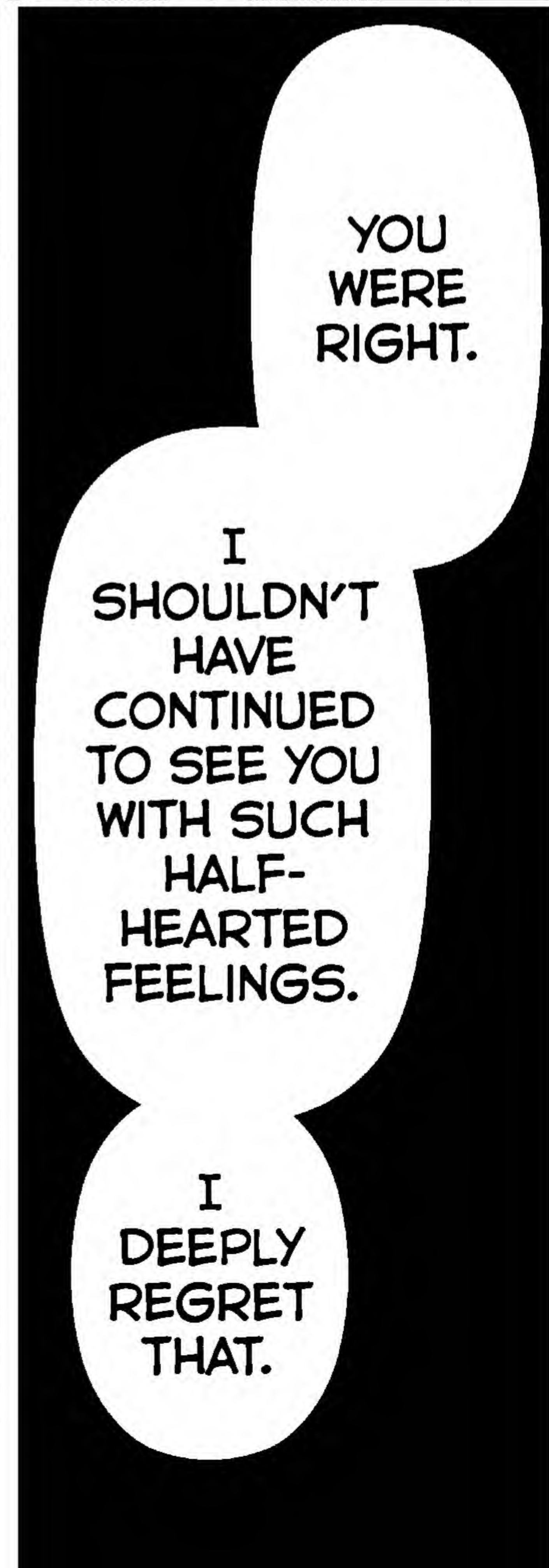
I'M SORRY  
FOR EVERY-  
THING  
UNTIL NOW.

IF  
YOU'LL  
EXCUSE  
ME...



**BUT I'M  
AFRAID I  
HAVE TO  
DECLINE  
YOUR  
OFFER.**

**I'M  
SORRY,**



YOU  
WERE  
RIGHT.

I  
SHOULDN'T  
HAVE  
CONTINUED  
TO SEE YOU  
WITH SUCH  
HALF-  
HEARTED  
FEELINGS.

I  
DEEPLY  
REGRET  
THAT.





BUT SHE  
THINKS  
THIS WILL  
BE ENOUGH  
TO WIPE  
THE SLATE  
CLEAN?

SILLY  
GIRL.

NOT ONLY  
WAS HER  
ANSWER  
FOOLISH,

HEH,  
HEH.



**MY BE-  
LOVED.**

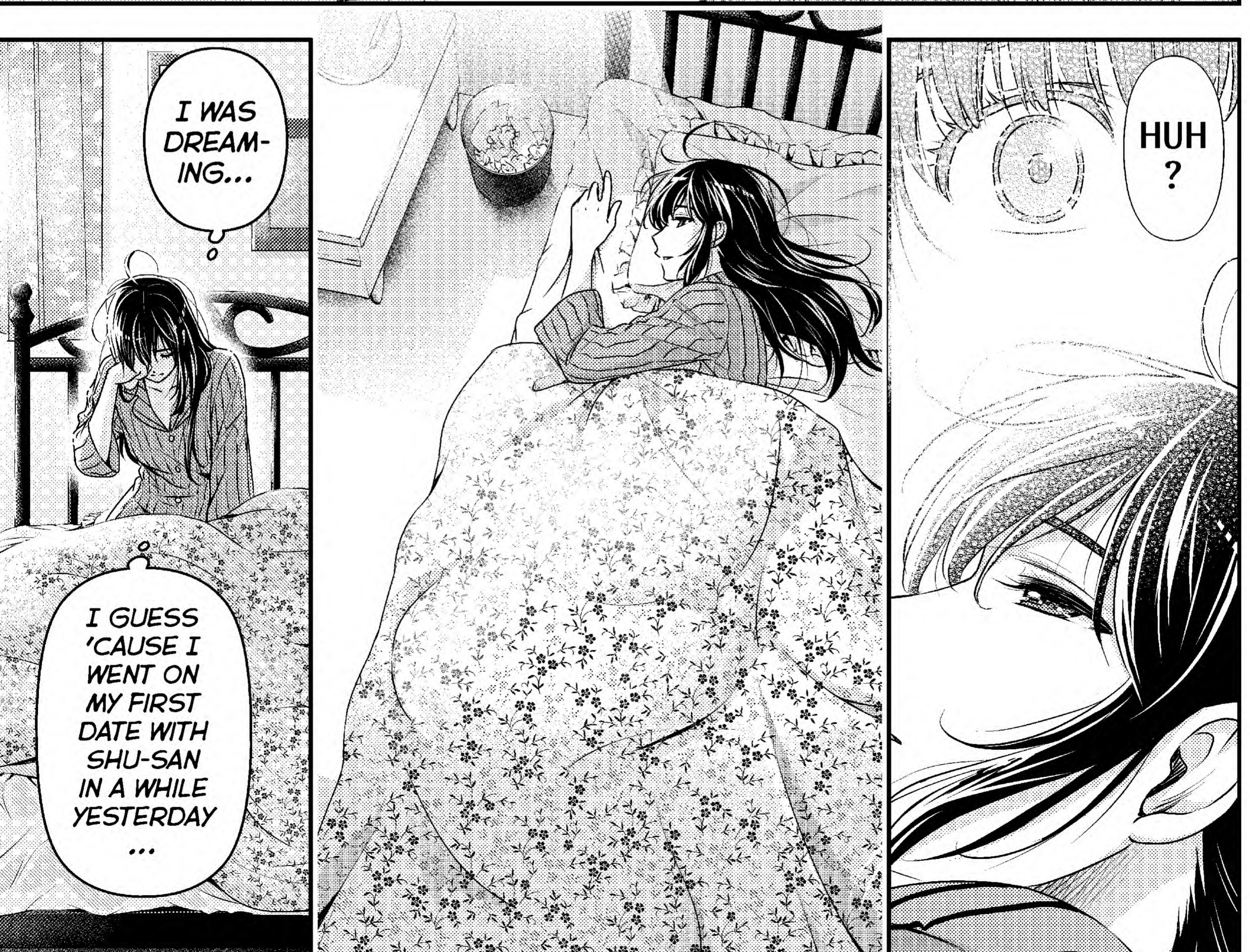
**AS IF  
I'D BE  
ABLE TO  
LET YOU  
GO THAT  
EASILY,**

...to be continued.



**BONUS COMIC**

**SOMETIMES I THINK ABOUT  
WHEN WE HAD ONLY JUST MET**





...GO  
LIKE  
THIS...



IT  
WASN'T  
SUP-  
POSED  
TO...











AND I  
JUST KEEP  
MESSING  
UP OVER  
AND OVER  
AGAIN...

I KNOW I'M  
NOT WHERE  
I WANTED  
TO BE...

...BUT I  
CAN'T DO  
ANYTHING  
ABOUT IT,  
AND IT'S  
MAKING ME  
MISERABLE  
...



I  
GUESS  
...

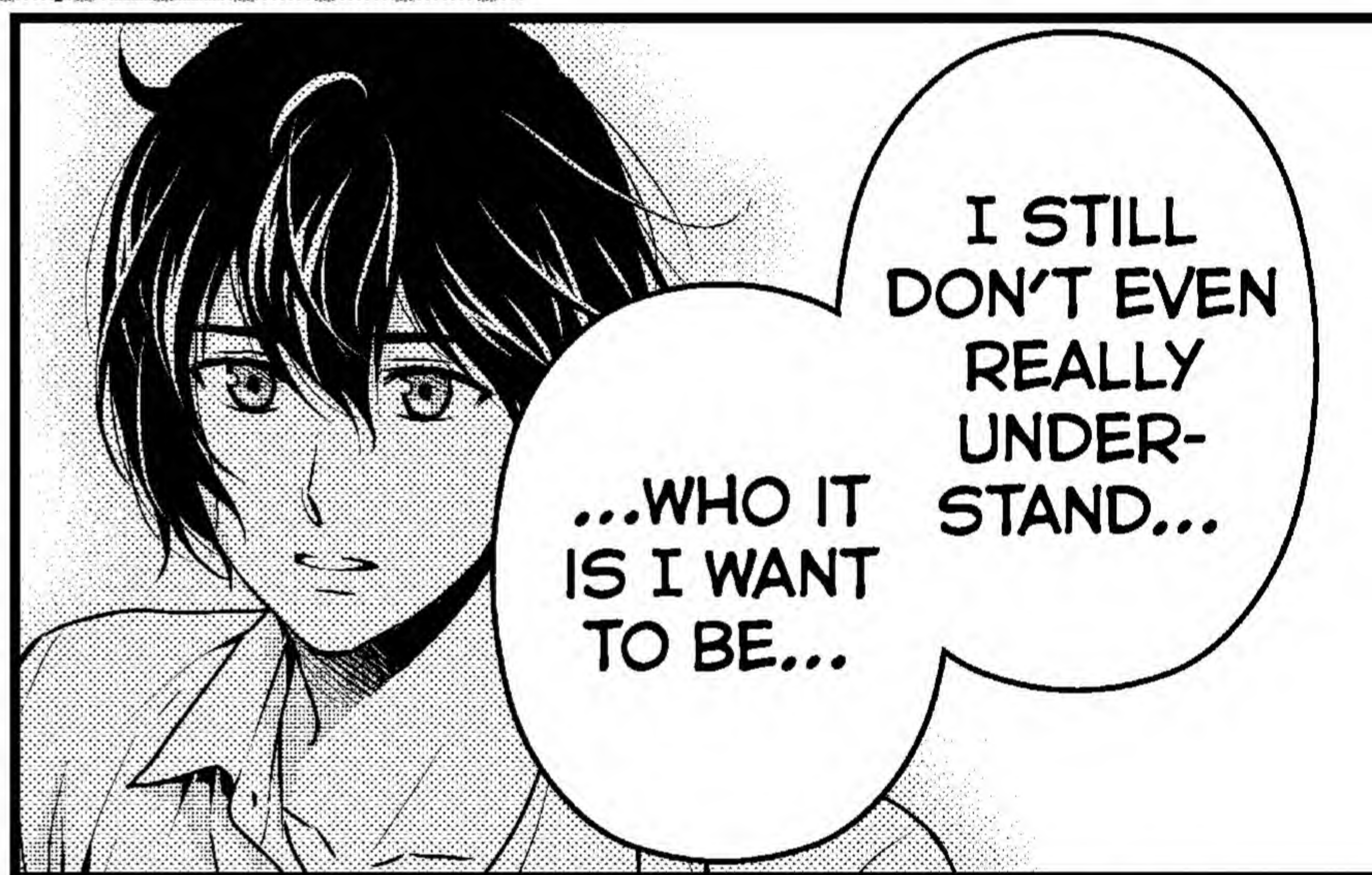
...IT KINDA  
FEELS LIKE  
NOTHING'S  
GOING  
RIGHT.



UH  
....!

THERE'S  
NO POINT  
IN RAMBLING  
ON WHILE  
KEEPING  
THINGS SO  
VAGUE, IS  
THERE?

SORRY  
FOR  
BRINGING  
THIS  
UP!



...WHO IT  
IS I WANT  
TO BE...

I STILL  
DON'T EVEN  
REALLY  
UNDER-  
STAND...



NO PRO-  
BLEM...

WHAT'S  
UP? YOU  
WANTED  
SOME-  
THING?



SORRY!  
IT WAS MY  
TURN TO  
TIDY UP,  
AND IT  
TOOK A  
WHILE...



WOULD  
YOU  
MIND...

...COMING  
BACK HERE  
AFTER  
SCHOOL?





IT'S ABOUT  
A TEACHER  
WHO FINDS  
MEANING  
WHILE GOING  
THROUGH  
HARDSHIP.

I JUST  
BROUGHT  
IT TODAY.

A  
BOOK  
?

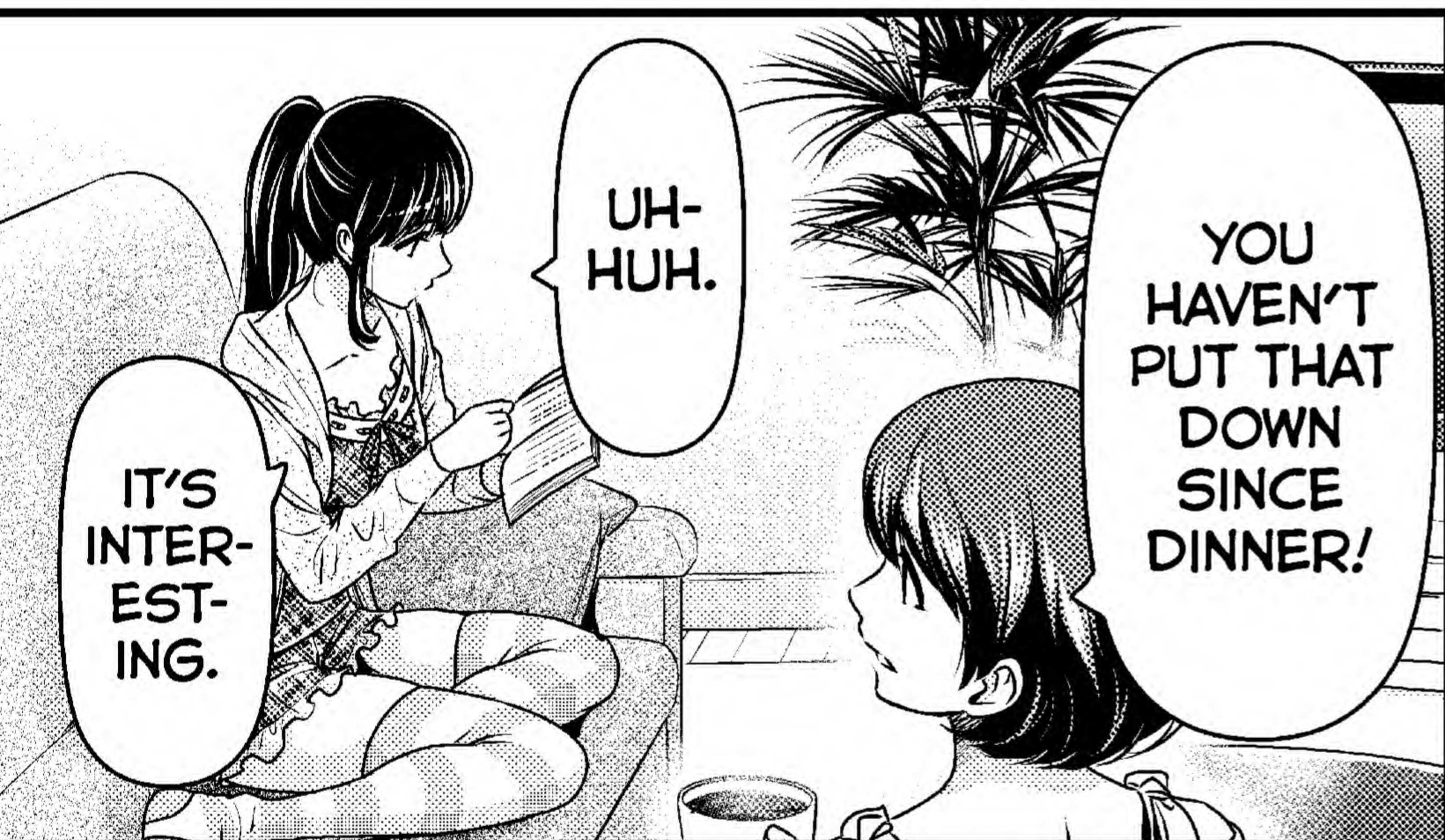


I  
WANTED  
TO GIVE  
YOU  
THIS...



AH...

I  
THOUGHT  
IT MIGHT  
HELP YOU  
OUT.



UH-  
HUH.

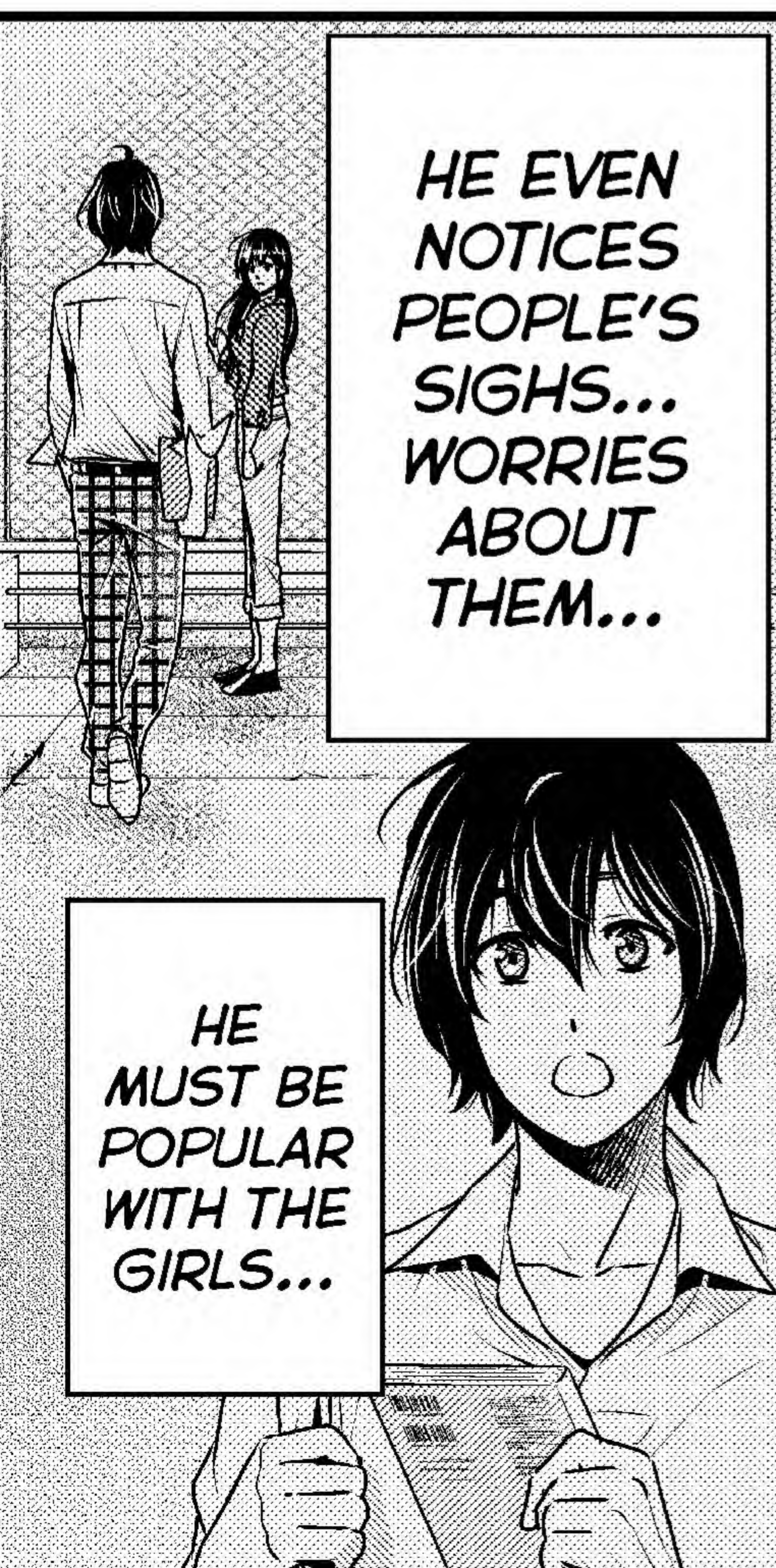
IT'S  
INTER-  
EST-  
ING.

YOU  
HAVEN'T  
PUT THAT  
DOWN  
SINCE  
DINNER!



...HE  
THOUGHT  
I WAS  
TALKING  
ABOUT MY  
JOB...

AT  
LUNCH-  
TIME...



HE EVEN  
NOTICES  
PEOPLE'S  
SIGHS...  
WORRIES  
ABOUT  
THEM...

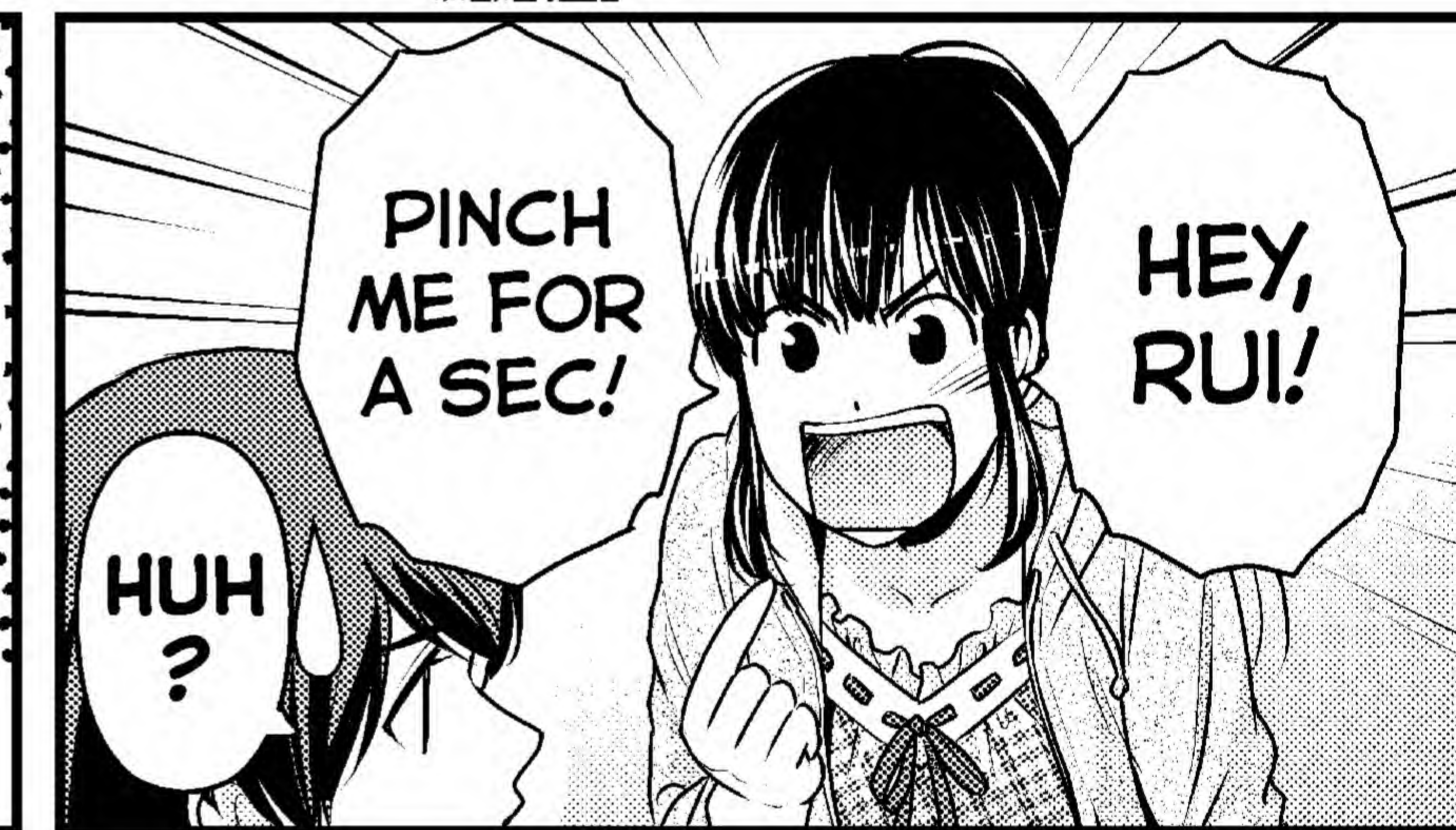
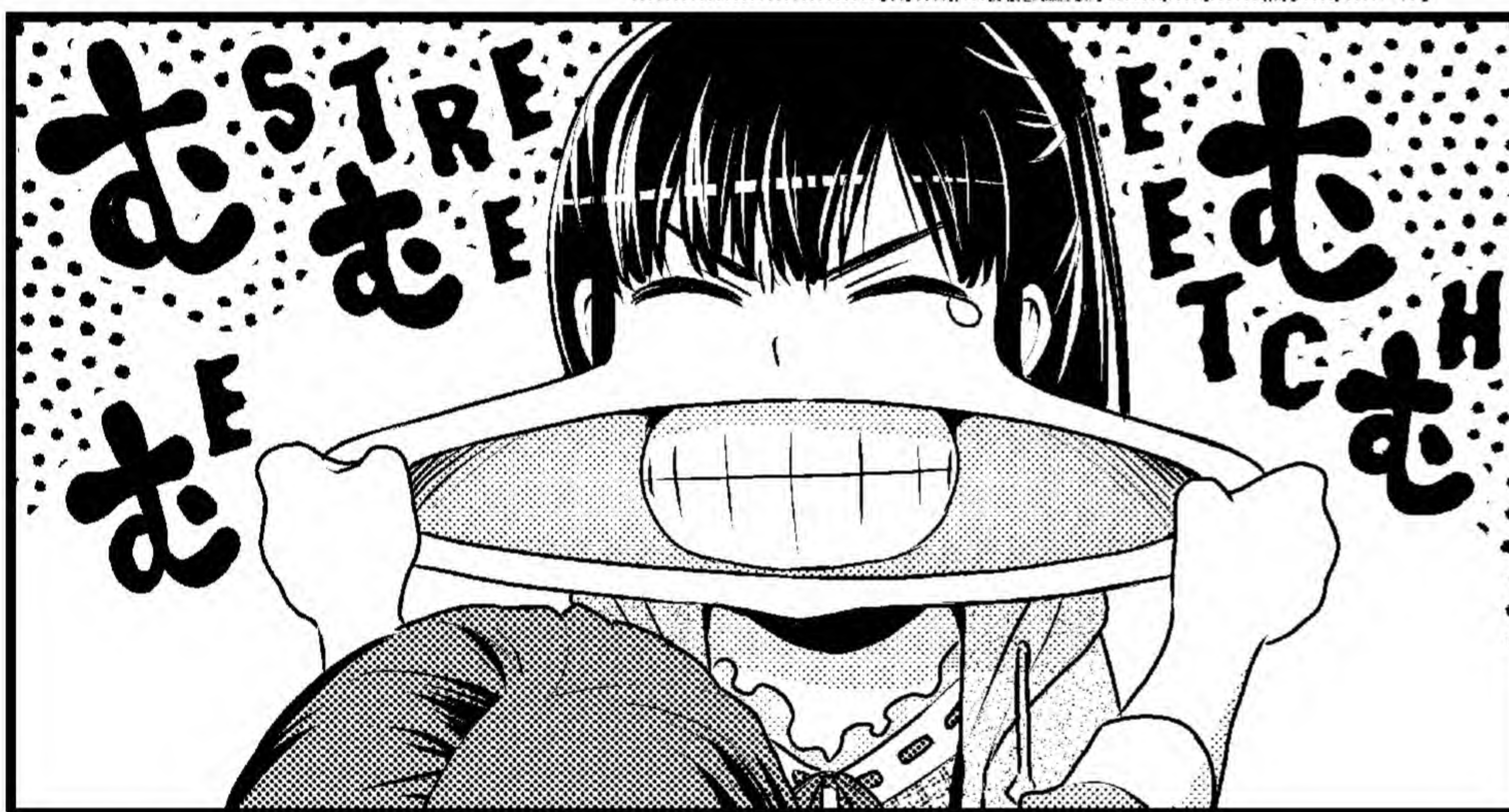
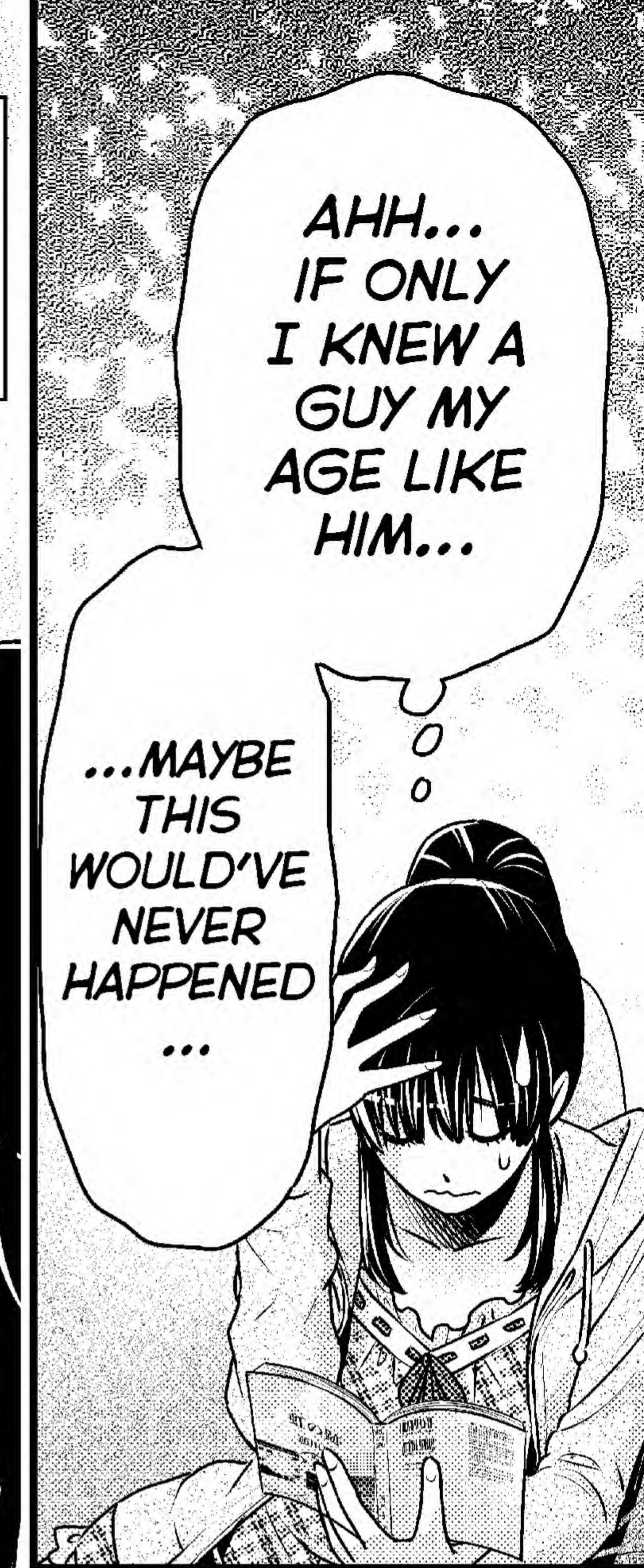
HE  
MUST BE  
POPULAR  
WITH THE  
GIRLS...



HE'S  
SUCH  
A NICE  
KID...

FUJII-  
KUN...









...SO  
IT WAS  
REALLY  
HELPFUL  
TO SEE  
ANOTHER  
WAY OF  
LOOKING  
AT  
THINGS!

I'VE BEEN  
THINKING TOO  
MUCH ABOUT  
MY TRIVIAL  
PROBLEMS  
AND MAKING  
MYSELF  
DEPRESSED  
...



I FOUND  
MYSELF  
NODDING  
ALONG WITH  
EVERYTHING  
THE PROTAG-  
ONIST SAID!

I  
COULDN'T  
PUT IT  
DOWN!  
I READ  
IT ALL IN  
ONE GO!

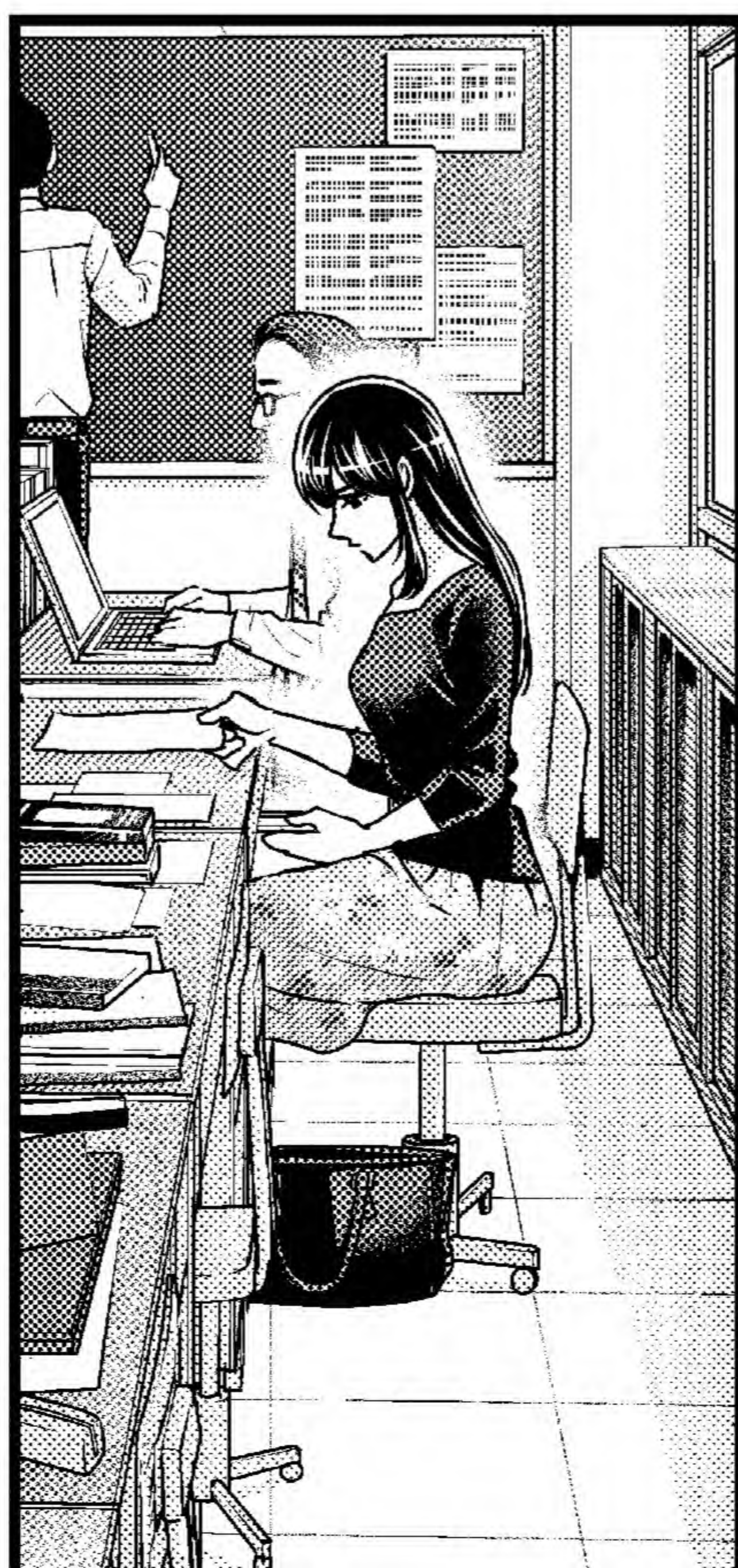


SORRY!

HEY!  
QUIT  
TALKING  
OVER  
THERE!



From: Shu Hagiwara  
To: Hina Tachibana  
Subject: None  
  
Sorry.  
I can't see  
you today.



HER  
SHIRT'S  
OPEN!

HINA-  
CHAN'S  
LOOKING  
SEXY  
TODAY,  
HUH?

I  
THOUGHT  
SO TOO!





IT'S THINGS YOU CAN DO WHEN YOU'RE FEELING DEPRESSED!

THERE'S A BUNCH... LIGHT EXERCISE, GO GET SOME SUN...



FUJII-KUN...?

I WROTE THESE DOWN FOR YOU...



AH!  
I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!



...YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE HER VERY HAPPY!

WELL, I'M SURE WHEN YOU DO...



I WAS THINKING THAT MUST BE REALLY TOUGH...

...YOU NEVER LET THAT AFFECT YOUR TEACHING, DO YOU?

YOU SAID YOU GET DEPRESSED A LOT, BUT...



I SEE ...

HUH ?!  
N-NO...



FUJII-KUN...  
DO YOU HAVE A GIRL-FRIEND?

I GET DEPRESSED WHEN I HAVE WRITER'S BLOCK, TOO...

With those words, she accidentally made Natsuo start to have feelings for her...

END



## **Domestic Girlfriend 18**

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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